

SHERRIE STOROR

Ep. 8 | The future vision of real estate with Leanne Pilkington.

Show Guests:

[Leanne Pilkington](#) – Managing Director of Laing and Simmons Corporate.....

Overview:

Are you wondering what the future of our industry is going to look like post COVID? Curious to hear about all the innovation and pivoting that has occurred in our industry over the past few months?

In today's episode, I speak to a woman with her finger on the pulse of the real estate industry, CEO of Laing+Simmons and President of the REINSW, Leanne Pilkington. Leanne shares with us the future vision of real estate and how collaboration will allow us to level up as an industry!

Hot Gossip:

My 51-Point Checklist: This is a step-by-step 51-point checklist that takes you through going from off-market to on market to exchange to settled to sold. Get my step-by-step process to follow from social media, managing your CRM, working your pipeline sellers, letterbox drop emails to text messages and videos to send. This will help you build your stock list even in this challenging time. You can download it for free from [here](#).

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Sherrie:

Let's get on to today's episode and I'm super pumped to introduce Leanne Pilkington. Now she is one of the industries most respected thought leaders and sought-after commentators, she is the CEO of **Laing+Simmons**, she is the President of the Board of the **REINSW** and in fact she is one of the only female Managing Directors that we see right through out franchising here in Australia and most certainly the only one in NSW. Now she has be a finalist in many categories, but she has been a winner of the REB Thought Leader of the Year and last year she was crowned as the Most Influential Woman in Real Estate at the AREA's thanks to the realestate.com awards. So please welcome to the show, Leanne Pilkington.

Leanne:

Thank you so much for having me, it's great to see you.

Sherrie:

Now, I've been a guest on your podcast now you are a guest on mine, so snap! And for those people who haven't heard one of your podcasts, this is your opportunity to give it a plug. So, go for it.

Leanne:

Oh, thank you very much. It's called *Courageous Conversations* and it's about the conversations that you have that are not really very comfortable, but they're the ones that you have to have to take yourself to the next level to get to the next stage of whatever it is personally or professionally.

Sherrie:

Yeah, it's a great podcast. I loved being a part of it, but I actually love listening to all the episodes and you've got so many different people from internally in the industry, you know, externally plus men and women, it's a great initiative, but we've actually known each other for quite a number of years now and we originally met, I don't know if you remember when I was engaged to come and do a keynote for Laing+Simmons in Noosa, do you remember that?

Leanne:

Yeah, I don't even know how I found you, but somebody recommended, I was looking for someone to talk about social media and agents specifically to talk about social media and somebody recommended that I speak to you and how lucky was that.

Sherrie:

I know very lucky. I think it might have been after I spoke at AREC actually around that same sort of period of time. But, you know, I had a great time. It was certainly one of my first keynotes, so thank you very much. But you know, since then obviously I've then gone on to launch my own coaching business and you know, as part of that, I decided to make the change to sort of take my women in real estate business breakfast national. And I knew that you were doing a number of other initiatives for women in the industry. And for me, what made sense was that we get together, we kind of collaborate and try and make it super successful for the betterment of the industry. But honestly, I didn't really know you very well and I remember picking up the phone and organising a time to come and meet you in your boardroom in Castlereagh Street. Do you remember this?

Leanne:

Yes, I remember.

Sherrie:

And I didn't know whether I was going to be thrown out in 15 minutes because I didn't know what your reaction was going to be. But you know, knowing you and the woman that you are, you of course totally embraced me. And you know, said, look, let's get on board, let's do this together. And you have been one of my champions since, so thank you very much.

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Leanne:

Absolutely, I think that we just get so much further with collaboration and anybody who wants everything for themselves, it's just not the way the world works unfortunately, so I'm really keen to collaborate and I love seeing people like you just go and literally do live your best life and build a new business. And I'm just so proud of everything you've achieved, it's really been a joy to watch.

Sherrie:

Thank you darling, thank you so very much, that really makes my heart warm. But you know, I think that's what really what this episode is actually all about. It's all about collaboration and working together in conjunction with each other, not only for the benefit of our consumers, for our agents, for our industries, but also for ourselves because there's great learning that can be taken there. The other topics that I'm really keen to cover today, are you know, resilience, adaptation, innovation and professionalism in our industry. But look, I think what's really interesting is that throughout this whole Covid-19 kind of period, we are seeing a number of agents coming together and collaborating in a number of different ways. Have you been seeing this out in the marketplace?

Leanne:

Yeah certainly we're finding that people are a lot more willing to talk to each other. And certainly all of the updates that I'm sharing with our Laing+Simmons family members, I am also sharing with other agents that are in our world, whether they're Laing+Simmons or no matter what brand they are, so, you know, I've been doing videos and my property managers to share with their tenants, for example, saying "you do have an obligation to pay rent". Because, you know, it's coming from a third party and I am, you know, I'm a respected industry figure these days, so happy to share anything that we have with people and I've been jumping onto various websites and various Facebook pages and all that stuff, just sharing the information that I have because we're all, we are all in it together and we're stronger together. Right.

Sherrie:

Absolutely. And I think that has been a really powerful message coming out of this. And you know, I think when I, I have a look and I've been talking to a number of different agents who like you have sort of been getting together and having conversations and I was speaking to **Nick Borden** last week from **Elders Real Estate** in Lennox Heads and Bangalow and he was saying he has been doing exactly that. He's been sharing with the other agencies in his marketplace what to do in terms of how they're handling managing of their team and their staff, you know, sales and open homes and also, you know, property management and as you're talking about dealing with your rental arrears and those sorts of things. But you know, it's not just New South Wales that we're seeing this, it's also right across the country and Australasia and you know, another one of my agents **Tahlia Gabrielli** who is based in South Australia, she's in Mount Gambier and she was saying, which I was actually really impressed about is there whole town kind of got together all the agencies and prior to the government sort of putting a cease and permitting open homes they actually decided to stop it a week earlier. And what I loved about this is the fact that all of the agencies actually honored it. It wasn't like one just decided, no, no, I'm going to go off on my own. But you know, there are those two sort of thoughts, school of thoughts in the industry. There is that kind of old school and there is you know, the new Guard. What benefit do you think it has to really, you know, come together and collaborate?

Leanne:

There are heaps of benefits, you know, firstly the way we're seen in the eyes of the consumer, we have the ability to change that, in a positive way. But we all do need to do the right thing and we all do need to behave in not just to the letter of the law, but in the spirit of what they're trying to achieve. You know, for example, I had a phone call earlier today. Someone's saying, oh, there's an agent in my area advertising that they've got private inspections within the timeframe, between 10 and 11 on Saturday. Is that allowed? And I'm like, well, there's nothing that says it's not allowed, but it's not in the spirit of what the

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Government is trying to achieve. And if you have people turning up late or early, potentially you'll have a queue outside that's not a good look. And if we do things, if we push the envelope to try and find ways around the rules. We run the risk of getting shut down altogether. And so, we have to work together to work in the spirit of what the Government's trying to achieve. And we can all do that together. It's not about me getting a jump on you. It's about all of us working together.

Sherrie:

I love that. And I think that's so incredibly correct. And I think, you know, just talking about Covid-19, you know, I think a big part of the reason why it was shut down in the first place is because we're all like, look how many people we're having through opens, look at our auction rates, look how many properties we're selling. So, it just made sense that the Government was of course going to take that into their own account. But I think, you know, coming back to this collaboration, you know, for me there is so much equity in our relationships that we have, whether it be, you know, in between agencies or agents or even in terms of our suppliers and our consumers, and this can then kind of almost create like a referral economy, which, you know, in essence gives you equity in those relationships, right?

Leanne:

Oh, absolutely no doubt, there is plenty of business for everybody and there's actually plenty to be gained by helping somebody else achieve whatever it is they are trying to achieve, so yeah, I'm all for collaboration.

Sherrie:

Love it. So, look, I must admit, I really love your real estate story and I love how you got into the industry. So, tell us, how did you actually come to work in real estate?

Leanne:

Well, I started working literally answering dad's phone. He had three offices in the Hills District in Sydney, and I was 12 years old and I was his Sunday girl. Because I used to play competitive squash. You might not know that about me, but I was an A grade squash player. And so, I used to play squash on Saturday and worked for dad on a Sunday. So, when I finished my, HSC I went up to the Gold Coast for schoolies, like all good people from Sydney do. And I ran out of money and rang dad and said, can you send me some money? And he said, sure, so long as you work for me until you go to uni. And I was planning on becoming a teacher. So, I said, sure, yep I'll do that. And of course, I stayed for 8 years. He used to fire me every Friday and even now, as recently as yesterday, I spoke to dad and he said, you know, Leanne I'm really proud of you. I think firing you every Friday was a good thing. I'm like, yeah good on your dad.

Sherrie:

It's credit for making you, I love it. But you know, because your family was really a real estate family and you know, it was you and your brother and your sister who all worked in the business and big shout out to, to **Lyndall** and to **Kent** who's actually working for Laing+ Simmons today correct?

Leanne:

Yeah, Lyndall and Kent have got the Quakers Hill/Schofields, Laing+Simmons office. And I used to work in the business with my sister. I never worked with my brother though because he's eight years younger. So, by the time he got into real estate I was no longer working for dad. I was out doing other things.

Sherrie:

Well, obviously real estate is in your blood, but I don't know, you told me this story and maybe I've just fantasised it in my mind, but I remember having this conversation around how the three of you, where the unpaid sort of letterbox droppers and there was one particular time where you got caught in a storm letterbox dropping.

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Leanne:

Totally. Yeah, there was a thunderstorm and we hid under a truck which is always go to safe right, you know, I think Kent must've only been about four or five at the time and so yeah, there we were all taking shelter under a truck. So thankfully the truck driver didn't come out and want to drive away. But yeah, letterbox drops we use to have to do them for dad all the time.

Sherrie:

And so during your time of working with your father, you also become a certified Valuer, correct?

Leanne:

Yeah, I did, I never wanted to be a real estate agent and I think that was just because I saw all of the hours and the stress and the stuff that, you know, dad owning his own business or having three offices went through. So, I just never wanted to be an agent. So, when I started working for him and I'd made the decision not to go to uni, I decided I wanted to study. And so, I studied three nights a week, I drive from Castle Hill into the city and that was before the M2 or any of those roads. So, I did that three nights a week for four years and became a Valuer.

Sherrie:

And so there really was a, you know life changing decision that was made because you know, you then sort of dabbled in, in working in recruitment and you also worked in commercial managing shopping centres. But you made the life changing move to come and work for Laing+Simmons and you know, this year, I think you said it is your silver anniversary.

Leanne:

25 years.

Sherrie:

That's pretty impressive I have to say, but you didn't really join the company as a big swinging dick. And obviously today you are the CEO. In actual fact, you know, you started in administration correct. And you took a 30% pay cut.

Leanne:

Yeah, I did. As you said, I was managing a shopping center and I was very unhappy in that role for a number of different reasons. And an old friend of mine said to me, you know what, Lee, I think you'd be great working with me, I could really use your help, but I can't pay you very much. And I'm like, alright. And I knew of the Laing+Simmons brand because my friend had been there for something like 15 years. So, I thought, you know what, it might be a really nice job and I deserve a nice job. After the stress I'd been through with three or four years at the shopping center, I deserved a nice job. So talk it over with my husband Rob, and we decided yep indeed I'll take the pay cut and I will go and I was the, I can't remember if I was the admin manager or the marketing manager, I don't remember which one came first, but that was my role and then, yeah, that was, you know, that was a really interesting experience in itself because my friend, whilst, you know, I absolutely loved as a friend as a boss, he was not the best leader I'd ever had and the reality was he would get in at 10am, he would read the newspaper until 12pm, and then he'd go to lunch for the rest of the afternoon. And that's what he would do every day. And I'd be like, oh, hold on a minute, what's going on? And so, I literally, I just had to make it up as I went to be frank. And I've been doing that for 25 years now.

Sherrie:

Well, evidently something is working, but there was a turning point where obviously you sort of, you know, stepped out from administration manager to marketing manager to becoming general manager in the business. So, tell us like what happened here. I think there's a story, if I remember correctly.

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Leanne:

So after my friend and I only worked together for about 18 months and the business was sold and it was sold to our commercial franchisees, **Tony Anderson** and **Rob Farrell** and Tony is a very charismatic leader, the kind of person that everybody wants to be around. And very smart man, very successful man. And I worked alongside him and I loved it because he would go in and make all these massive proclamations about what we were going to do. And then I would go along in the background and actually make those things happen. And that's where I saw myself. I saw myself as a really good number two and we were a great team and he was going on holidays - We'd been working together for, I don't know, 12 or 18 months, I guess, and he was going on holidays and he walked past me and said, see you later kiddo, I was thinking two weeks. And then he literally backwards and said, Oh, by the way, you are so much better at this franchising stuff than me. I'm going to go back to selling commercial real estate and I want you to be the general manager anyway, I'll see you in two weeks and off he went and I was just like what just happened? and my assistant at the time, **Lisa Diver-Tuck**, who I'm still friends with today, ran into my office and said did I just hear what I thought I heard? and I was like I have no idea but let's have a champers anyway, so that's what we did, and it was a massive lesson to me because I rang all my franchisees and said, look, this is what's happened. Because, I was concerned that they wouldn't be happy with the news, even though they knew me, they'd all known me for quite a few years, four or five years probably by then.

Sherrie:

Sorry, can I just interrupt, why did you think that they would not be happy with the news?

Leanne:

Well, I didn't see myself as a leader and I didn't see myself as, you know, my idea of a great leader is one of those really charismatic people that, people are drawn towards that people want to be around and that people want to listen to and I didn't see myself that way. So it had been five years, I'd been in the business and so I rang them all and told them what had happened and everybody was really excited and I made all my calls and I thought, I don't understand why they were also happy about it. So, I rang a few that I knew particularly well and said, why are you so happy? And they all said a version of the same thing. We know how much you care about Laing+Simmons, we know how much you care about us and we know how much she cares about our businesses and that's what we want from our leader. And so, it was really powerful, they, you know, the old people don't care about how much, you know, until they know how much you care is, you know, it's very, very true.

Sherrie:

It's a very important sediment today actually. But how long did that notion and that happiness last, because the decision was then made to basically make some pretty drastic changes in the business and you know, the decision was made to turn sort of 60 offices or 60 franchises into 27. So, tell us about that.

Leanne:

Wasn't that fun. I think part of the reason I've been able to be happily with Laing+Simmons for 25 years, is we have had three owners during that time and every owner had a very different view. So, the first owner they wanted dots on maps, they didn't care they just wanted office numbers and so we had a business development manager out getting business. When Rob and Tony took over, they had a very different view that isn't what they wanted at all. They wanted a claim brand. They wanted to only work with people with really high ethical standards. They were very specific and very clear in the kind of people that I thought should be part of the Laing+Simmons family. So, my early franchising was more about disenfranchising then getting people to join. So it was challenging, but it's been, it's been worthwhile because now I'd buy Dexar who also own the independent brand in Canberra and whilst they are very happy to grow the brand, they're also very specific with the kind of people they want to grow the brand with as well. So yeah, it's been, it's been an interesting time.

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Sherrie:

Well let's kind of break that down because you talk about, you know, the business being sold again 8 years later and being bought by Dexar and you know, what we normally see when we see a business that sold, whether it be in real estate or any other industries, we do see that the management team sort of tends to turn over and there's a lot of change. So how have you actually been able to keep that top job throughout these three business owners?

Leanne:

I haven't got a bloody clue! No, I think I am very synonymous now with the Laing+Simmons brand and the guys in Dexar, they never wanted to be in Sydney managing the brand. They were always planning on staying in Canberra. And so, they could see that I was the key to a smooth transition for them and they appointed me as Managing Director a couple of years into their ownership, which was, which was really nice as well.

Sherrie:

So how is it that you, you see your position or your role in Laing+Simmons today?

Leanne:

Yeah, I do very much see myself as a leader now. I have got a phenomenal team, a corporate team around me. They're really care. They care passionately about the brand as I do, which is not easy to find, and I really value that. And because of that, I can do other things. As you know, I'm President at the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales, I saw my second term as presidency in the middle of covid -19, hell of a time to be president. Let me tell you.

Sherrie:

And I going to really explore this actually, because I think it's a really important topic to talk about for a number of different reasons.

Leanne:

Sure. And I've also got *the Real Women in Real Estate* network, which is not just national, but we've got groups in New Zealand and also in Los Angeles. So obviously that's been a little bit curtailed, either over recent weeks but, that's okay. So, yeah, I can't even remember the question now.

Sherrie:

Yeah. Well we're just talking about your current role at Laing+Simmons and I think, you know, one of the things that I've heard you say on a number of different occasions is that you really see that it's your role to provide that level of service to, you know, to your agents and to franchise owners. So, you know, what is it that you're looking for, I guess, when you're recruiting business into the franchise today, you know, and I see you as an organisation, are you in a growth phase?

Leanne:

Yeah, we are actually, our newest office only started on Tuesday of this week, would you believe, Tuesday after Easter, yeah in Armadale, shout out to **Lachie Sewell** in Armadale. He is an awesome young guy who is excited and enthusiastic about the industry, the opportunities and about the brand. And that's really first and foremost, what I look for is that passion and enthusiasm for the industry. And I want people that are going to engage. I want people that want to be part of the type of brand that Laing and Simmons is, which is a very inclusive, collaborative brand. I'm a very big believer that there's a different brand suitable for different people. Not all brands suit all people. And for us, we want people that want to work with us. We want people that want to get involved and challenge our thinking and you know, push us to do different, more interesting things. So that's really what we look for.

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Sherrie:

Well that's really interesting actually because if we have a look at the style of managing and the style of business ownership over the last 20 years, you know, once upon a time, you know, it was all about dictating and it was all about a very much a strong enough forceful approach. And then we've kind of had this society and cultural kind of change now where, you know, great leadership today really seems to be very open and honest about problems and concerns in the business and various different issues. So, how have you been able to adapt through all of these kinds of cultural and society changes in order for you to grow and to still be the leader that you are today?

Leanne:

My natural approach is collaborative, and I find that it's easier to get people on board if you understand their perspective. So, I can put myself in other people's shoes very easily and if I can understand what they're trying to achieve and I can understand what I'm trying to achieve, we can work together to achieve that effectively. So, I let dictate the dictator approach, that so many franchisers used for a long time. I know there are some out there that are still trying it, but it's just, it's just not the way of the world works anymore.

Sherrie:

Look at and we have moved on. I think the other thing that we've also moved on with, and I think, you know, Covid-19 has really kind of taken it to another level is flexible work environments. You know, once upon a time we expected someone to be in the office at 8:30am that they wouldn't have a lunch break, that they didn't leave the office and that they weren't making any calls or you know, they weren't working hard unless you actually saw them in the office. And, you know, I know that there's a number of people who you know are and who have been in your business that you have given this flexibility of working from home. Now this is taken to a completely different level because we've got to create our own accountability. But you know, do you feel that that has, you know, helped you grow and find the right people to be a part of your business?

Leanne:

Yeah, I've been lucky enough for people to actually often come to me and say that they wanted to work for me, and I do believe in understanding what outcomes people want. So, let me give you an example. **David** who I'm sure you know, started in my business four years ago and Dave was my network growth person. Now, Dave, it was hilarious, the interviewee I remember we're sitting in a cafe in Dee Why, he's very intense my friend Dave, and he said to me now Leanne I've got a lot of things that I need to understand about you and your business before I can agree to come and work for you. I'm like, okay and so I said, look how about this Dave you interview me for an hour and if you're happy then you can come into town into the office and I will interview you.

And so that's the way, that's the way that we approached it. And David had been working for me for not that long when I realised that it didn't really light his fire being a business development person he wanted to be a coach. And so, I said, okay, here's some things that you need to do for me to think about you in that space. And he went away. He invested time and money in training, learning, a whole lot of skills. And when that happened, I employed him as our full-time coach. And then he sort of came to me a year later and said, okay, well this has been great, but what I want to do is build my own business and so then we moved him to a three day a week consultant for Laing+Simmons and the other two days a week he was building his own coaching business.

Now some people might look at that and think, Oh God, you're mad. You're just helping him move away from you. But for me, I've had a loyal, productive employee for four years that I would have lost probably three years ago if I, didn't adapt with what he wanted and if I didn't really understand what he wanted, so that's the key, really having your people and not everybody's willing to be honest with you about what they want. But if people are happy to trust you with what their goals are, then you can actually often help them make it happen.

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Sherrie:

I think that's really interesting what you say there because you know, it is about empowering people and we're so lucky to have them as part of our journey, you know, and part of the businesses journey. And we need to also understand that it's not just them working for us, but we're also working for them. And it needs to be a collaborative kind of match. And you know, there is a period of time where it is and then there are times where it does deviate and it changes and you can either embrace it and grow with it or there will be a time where it's no longer a match and you both go your separate ways.

Leanne:

And you have to be at peace with that. You know, I've been employing people for nearly 40 years right and the reality of the situation is every employee is effectively a volunteer. Yes, we pay them, but we know if you've got good people, they can pretty much work anywhere. So why are they going to choose to work for you? You have to be really clear on that.

Sherrie:

Exactly. So, I think, you know, what I'm hearing is that there's a lot of empowering and giving them freedom to become the best professional that they can be in order to deliver the best results within your business. But on top of all of that, I mean, you must obviously ask quite a lot of anyone who works with you, so what is it that you actively ask for them to do and to be and feel and to give?

Leanne:

Well, certainly, people need to be passionate about the brand and about the industry and about giving back to people, about, you know, just like there's a different franchise brand that suits different agents. There's a different brand that suits different employees as well. From a corporate perspective. I hate being micromanaged and I am hopeless at micromanaging people, I'm really not good at it. And that's ok, because that attracts a different kind of person. I'm outcome focused. So, I'm not about to tell my business development guy how many calls he needs to make every single day. But what I do do is sit down with him and have a conversation around what the goals are for this period of time, what are the outcomes that he wants to see, and then we get judged on our outcomes. So, it's yeah, it's just about conversations, right?

Sherrie:

Well, it's interesting talking about those conversations and talking about this story in terms of being interviewed by the interviewee so to speak. So, I think that's a really good tip in terms of how to hire people and showing that you're open to empowering it and collaboration. But there must be times where you've needed to fire people or break up with them. This is particularly probably quite pointed, but at this particular time through Covid-19 there are agencies that are hurting that are needing to obviously finish stuff up or they could even just be people who are no longer sort of performing to what's expected of them. So, what are your top tips when it comes to, you know, the breakup?

Leanne:

Yeah, I've actually, always been really good at people breaking up with. So, they get to the stage that they understand that they no longer a fit and they make the decision themselves. That doesn't always happen but I've had it happen more often than not, but if you do have to let someone go it's tricky because my natural style is to be really open and sometimes you can't be as open as you would like when you've got to achieve things in a certain way so sometimes it can be tricky. You need to get clear but, have the boundaries clear, know what she, wants, what she can and can't say but I think typically most people shouldn't be surprised if this is coming because you should be having conversations along the way about performance management conversations.

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Sherrie:

and that's exactly what we're sort of hearing here. It's a matter of being open in terms of their ability and what they're doing well and what they're not doing well. You know, give them an opportunity to improve. And if not, then they're going to know themselves, hey, listen, if, if they don't throw in the white flag, then basically they're going to be the one who's out of power with that. So, I like it. Get them to break up with you, not the other way around.

Leanne:

There's been lots of conversations around core values in recent years that we probably didn't have sort of 15 or 20 years ago. We just didn't even really know what that meant to be frank, but I find that the values that you have in the business can be really useful in those performance management conversations. So, you know, help me to understand how this behaviour is in line with this particular value and usually people just won't be able to change it.

Sherrie:

Really interesting. I think, in fact, very important because I think people today choose to work for managers, they don't necessarily choose to work for the corporation so to speak. So, how many times have we heard people who loved the business, but they didn't enjoy who they are managed by or people who stayed at a business that they didn't necessarily love because they loved who they were working directly with. So, it's when you can combine the two that really, it's quite powerful. And I think culturally, what I have seen from being involved in a number of different events through Laing+Simmons now over the years is that there is a lot of fun in the culture and there's a lot of really cool conferences with dress ups. And I think you're not afraid to poke fun at yourself. And I've seen you do dance routines and all kinds of various different things. But, you know, in addition to this, what else have you done to promote this kind of culture of growth and keeping the right people involved in the business?

Leanne:

So going back to the 25 years ago when I first started with Laing+Simmons, I mentioned I'd left a business that I was very unhappy with. I got to Laing+Simmons, and I discovered that the franchisees hated each other and hated head office even more. And I said to John, who was the General Manager at the time said, I can't do this again. I have just spent, you know, four years being completely miserable in a job and I just am not going to have it. So, we've got two choices. I'm happy to go and find another job or we can change the culture and so it was a very deliberate decision and it's not an easy thing to do and it happened over time. We did change the culture at Laing+Simmons, and you can see now it is a culture, we don't take ourselves too seriously, but we do take what we do very seriously. And so, I don't think there's anything wrong with having a whole lot of fun in amongst doing really good business. So that's what we try and actively promote.

Sherrie:

Oh, I love that. I think that's great. But you know, talking about franchises and talking about the franchise model, there has been quite a lot of conversation of late around, you know, this model and around, you know, the real estate industry in particular, you know, when it comes to flexibility of works, spaces, fees, you know, training and agents being able to have more control of marketing and their branding. And we are, you know, we've been seeing a number of different models kind of rolling out that is giving flexibility, on this, I mean, what are your thoughts in terms of, you know, today's current franchise models, particularly through Covid-19 and how things need to move forward in the future?

Leanne:

Well, certainly we have always been a brand that collaborates with our franchisees. And so, if they need to promote themselves in certain way and that outside of our guidelines, we have a conversation around what they're trying to achieve, why they can't achieve it with the material and collateral we have available. And if we can, we will work with them to develop something

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that works. There are certainly times when I say no, the logo is not pink and purple, they are not the colors. So, there are times when I just say, no, I can't do it and this is why. But I always give a reason as to why I want people to be really clear on what my perspective is and so that we can actually get to a point where everybody's comfortable. It's been really interesting though.

I think if you would talk to any of my franchisees today, they are blown away with the level of support and, information that they're getting from the corporate team over the last three weeks and so, yes, a few months ago people might be saying, oh, what is the value in a franchise? I can tell you my franchisees would not be asking that question right now. They are blown away. We've got a Facebook messenger group with all of our business owners in it so we know it's only business owners, so we can have a certain type of conversation. I do a video every morning and every afternoon just giving people an update of where everything is at. We do three webinars a week with various guest speakers and there's just so much information and support being provided to people that I think they feel safe in this environment that they may not feel, they may have felt differently if they were an independent. And we're actually negotiating with two independent offices right now about joining Laing+Simmons right in the middle of all of this.

Sherrie:

Well this is kind of the opportunity that I see right now too, I must admit because you know, we are seeing agents and agencies change right now and that is because they are getting that lack of support. And you know, if you are a business owner right now, you should be literally supporting your team and the way that you've just discussed. You should be sending out videos to, you know, to the people who are currently listed with your business, you know, to landlords to tenants. But you know, you need to really be spending that time with your team members and you know, it's a great time to grow a business right now, whether it be a franchise or an agency. And you know, I've even been talking to real estate recruiters who are saying they are busier than they've ever been because agents are just not seeing principals and business owners actually step up. So, it's interesting to hear you talk about business development for franchises right now.

Leanne:

Yeah, absolutely. And now is the time, um, that leaders need to step up. That is just, you know, whether you want to do it or not, it doesn't matter. You need to be the calm face, the calm influence in this turbulent time because most people don't do well in uncertainty and it's almost impossible to give people any certainty right now. And so, they need, they need to feel like somebody else is in control even when they're not. Does that make sense?

Sherrie:

Yes, totally makes sense. But I also think too, you know, taking ourselves out of Covid-19 and just looking, you know, in terms of normal, real life, what is normal, real life after this, we don't know. But essentially, you know, I think spending that time with your team is very important. Whether they be a franchise or whether they be somebody in your direct team, you know, one on one meetings, particularly I think are a very powerful and very important. But I do see that a lot of business owners and a lot of, you know, agents who have EBU's is very rarely spending the time to do these one on one meetings with their team. They just don't truly see the value in them. They're too busy, I mean, how important do you think one on one conversations are, you know, during Covid-19 and also, you know, in a normal world?

Leanne:

they're really important and you know, I'm as guilty as the next person for being too busy and not being able to do as many of them as I would like to either. But the thing is, you need to really understand your team. You need to really understand what motivates them, what's important to them. And the only way that you can do that is by having those genuine, authentic conversations, and being prepared to sort of drill in and ask questions.

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Sherrie:

Well, I think that's the part that I don't really understand and look, we both know what it's like to be incredibly busy. But I think with a lot of agents, they don't really necessarily see that it's actually a way of empowering your team and creating another little kind of center that's going to be busy, profitable in the right kind of ways. And you know, it is our responsibility talking about the society and cultural kind of changes where once a time somebody worked for you and you told them what to do, whereas now you're actually a part of their journey. And if you don't help particularly millennials as being a part of their personal development and their growth, they're not going to stay with you. So, I think a big part of this journey here is actually understanding and you've touched on it, understanding what their, you know, greater life goals are, how you can help them along the way, but also to empowering them on a day to day on a week to week basis and also on a much larger picture so that you can move forward in terms of those, those goals.

But you know Leanne, I think touching back to the fact that you've worked now for the same business for 25 years, that there have been three different business owners in a country where the average life span of a CEO is three years. I mean, you've done incredibly well. It's clear that you're an adapter, you know, can I say adapted? That sounds all kinds of wrong. So you know, when I think of adapting and when I think of you, you clearly have done this when it comes to managing people, but I think that there is another part of adapting and for you to have stayed on in this particular role. And that is in terms of, finding better ways of doing things, finding faster way of doing things, finding more profitable ways of doing things. And step one is obviously to be open to change, the second one is really that implementing, and technology has been a really big part of this for you. So how has it enabled you to implement and to create change in terms of systems and procedures?

Leanne:

So I think probably well, I think my greatest strength is probably the fact that I am very adaptable. I have never wanted to work from home. And now you may never get me out of home, even though I've got a very dodgy green screen behind me here, sorry about that. We were trying to be able to use the Zoom backgrounds, but it's not working very well anyway. But I think being adaptable is probably my greatest strength. It can be interesting, most people don't like change and so I trying to get real estate agents involved in technology has been a real and meaningful way, has been very challenging and that has been hilarious to watch everybody all of a sudden scramble for these zoom meetings and online auctions and all this stuff that you know, that they just didn't want to know about, you know, a month ago. Now all of a sudden, it's urgent. It's like, Oh, really? Now it's urgent. So, I think that's one of the great things that's going to come out of this is adapting to technology is going to be much, hopefully they're going to be more readily willing to do that. And you know having to do online market appraisals and all of this sort of stuff that they just, they would just laugh at me if we talked about it before.

Sherrie:

Well, I definitely think that's one of the cases there that, you know, and I talk a lot about this, the fact that I feel like we're stuck in the 80s because we're still doing things the way that we've always done them. The reason why we're doing that is because it's all about volume and transactions instead of the consumer experience. And we need to really understand that, you know, consumers have changed, and society has changed, and we really have been very aggressive against this change. Whereas now it's like, it has totally been a leveler for us. And you know, it's a great way for us, I think to definitely improve it and to have a lot of positive things that are coming out in the industry. But what technologies have you implemented into your business that have seen, you know, still a little bit outside the square, but you've seen great results from?

Leanne:

My favourite is Zoom we have a principals meeting every Monday morning with, you know,

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45, businesses around the state and we can see everybody and we only, I'm not one for a meeting for the sake of a meeting, so the meeting might be half an hour, or it might be 15 minutes. It's however long it is. But I just, I love that, and we won't be going back to traditional regional meetings in the way we've done them in the past, we'll be doing them more frequently over technology. So just something as simple as that I think we'll have a massive difference on the way we can connect with remote teams.

Sherrie:

I love that. All of that unproductive time in terms of driving, parking, you know, getting up there, having the chit chat, it's just straight into business. And I must admit that's obviously how my business has been operating for the last three years because I work with agents, you know, all over Australia and New Zealand. But you know, there's also been other things that I have seen that you've, you know, you've implemented as an organisation into, business. And one of those has been, you know, artificial intelligence and through the use of chatbox, particularly through, project marketing and working a project, which I believe was in Canberra. Correct?

Leanne:

The first one was in Canberra. Absolutely and so the artificial intelligence was just taught to answer the questions, that would normally go to a real estate agent. But what was interesting about that particular project was the two most expensive properties were sold, via the, artificial intelligence and those people were asked afterwards how the experience was and what they would've done if there was a buy now button. And they said, yeah, we would have just pressed it because we knew the property, when knew the developer, we knew the location. We were happy with what we saw. We would have been happy just to press a buy now button.

Sherrie:

That's crazy. But they clearly very qualified and they already had trust and confidence in the product, which I think is a very important note there. And that's again, something that we talk about so much in this industry is that magical word trust. But, you know, talking about this element of change and embracing change, why is it that you have chosen to stay with the same business for the last 25 years?

Leanne:

Because I love it. I love the people and I love the brand. And you know, some of the franchisees have been there since the beginning of my time there. So, they've been, you know, friends for 25 years. And so, I have been approached about a number of different jobs during my time, but it would have to be something very, very special, to get me out of Laing and Simmons because I just love it.

Sherrie:

Ok, but can I ask you, has there been a time in your career where you have felt legitimately kind of scared or thought that maybe it was time to move on where there's been a challenge there?

Leanne:

Oh look like, I'm not going to say that the last 25 years have all been happy. They haven't, you know, there was a period of time, that I was, I was not overly happy, but I've always been really good at identifying when I did need to do something different and so it's not always about getting a new job for me, I went back to university and did an MBA and so I felt there was something I always regretted was studying part time and not going to university and having that degree. So, I went back you know, when I was in my forties and did that. And I'm, you know, I'm really glad I did and, and I just always know when it's time for me to look for something else. But it doesn't necessarily mean about changing jobs. It just means doing things differently or doing different things.

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Sherrie:

Really powerful what you said there because what you talked about is that not necessarily expecting someone else to change, but you actually change your outlook, you change your mindset, you develop different skillsets and you basically, you know, took control and took ownership of that issue, I love that.

Leanne:

Yeah, you've got to take action, right. You can't expect somebody else to make life more interesting for you. You've got to make it more interesting for yourself.

Sherrie:

So as you mentioned earlier, you are on the board for the REINSW, so what does this role actually entail?

Leanne:

It's a whole different conversation this week then it was a month ago let me tell you. It is unbelievable, but what's been awesome for me is because, there's so much rumor and gossip and hearsay and Chinese whispers at the moment that for me it's been great to be at the coalface. So, I am the one speaking to Government and to our regulator and having those conversations. So, I know the answers and if I don't know the answer, I have got a direct line to the people who can give me the answers. And so that has been great. I wouldn't say I'm a control freak, but I certainly do like to, to be very certain of the information that I'm sharing. And I like being in a position where I can share information that I know is right. And so, for me at the moment it's all about educating the industry, making sure we all know exactly what we can and can't do all work together for, you know, a better outcome for everybody.

But prior to Covid-19, the reason I joined the board, I've been on the board for 10 or 12 years and I joined the board because in my job as the franchiser, I was having people come to me saying, Leanne I'd like to open a Laing+Simmons office and I would go, awesome, tell me about your real estate experience. Oh, well, I'm licensed, but I'm an accountant, so it's like well hold on, have you ever worked in real estate no, right. And that would happen time and time again because and bearing in mind we have different levels of qualification around the country. Right? But in New South Wales, and so people could go and do their license and have no real estate experience and within five or six weeks, get their license and open a business. And that just blew my mind. And so, I figured rather than complain about the situation, the only way I could impact it was to get on the board of the REI and drive positive change. And so that's what I've done. And finally the 23rd, and it's not still me, like the entire board of the real estate Institute has been passionately pursuing this for quite some time on the 23rd of March, the same day, Covid-19 pretty much hit our training and education reforms were passed and, actually implemented into industries. So that's something that I am really proud of and that's the kind of thing that the Institute does. It works to help government understand our industry and to have outcomes that are better, ultimately a better consumer experience, which, you know, I think that if it's good for the agent, it's good for the consumer. What's good for the consumer, is good for the agent. That's the way it is.

Sherrie:

Couldn't agree more. So, what I've really heard there is that it has been great for social conscious in terms of giving back to the industry, but it's also been really good, you know, for your business as well. So, I think, you know, when I talk to a lot of industry professionals as, yourself, I'm really keen to understand, you know, all of these thought leaders' opinions on the industry and where they see the future going. But more importantly, what is their kind of, you know, perfect notion and where they would like to see the industry heading? What's yours?

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Leanne:

Well, I would love to see the real estate industry become a profession. You know, I think that we deserve to be a profession and I think that if we can hold ourselves and each other to a higher standard of accountability, it will give a much better consumer experience and it will really provide a real estate career rather than, let's face it, we have got a reputation that's not great and the majority of us don't deserve it, but some of us do. Some of us do not do the right thing, we are in it for our own reasons, and usually financial ego and we need a way of weeding those people out. We really do.

Sherrie:

So, what is that way, I mean, you've talked about training reforms. What exactly are the training reforms that you are rolling out or that have rolled out?

Leanne:

So in new South Wales, there's a 600% increase in training and education requirements over what it was before, but that still doesn't mean we are leading the country. We're not, we are only just catching up to the Northern Territory, for example, and so in new South Wales you can only hold your certificate of registration for four years without progressing to become fully licensed. So, you can't just sit there, you have to continually develop your education. You can't open a business without having a couple of years' experiences. So, there are two different classes of license, a licensee in charge and just a license. So, there's just, they're just putting in more requirements for education and more requirements for experience, which is a good thing for everybody. But that's then the base from where we become a profession. So that's the base that's not the feeling.

Sherrie:

Well, I think that's interesting being talked about, being recognised as a, as a profession. And as you say, it's great for consumers. It's great for our buyers and sellers and wouldn't it be nice to be sort of at the top of the list for the most trusted professionals instead of at the very bottom. But you know, is this a national, initiative?

Leanne:

So it was something that, **John Cunningham** who is the previous president of the real estate Institute of new South Wales.

Sherrie: "Hi John"**Leanne:**

one of my favourite people in the world and John was absolutely passionate about it and he has been leading that charge for, gosh, about four years now, and speaking to people around the country. So, it is definitely something that we have a lot of excitement about around the country, particularly the high profile the higher performing businesses are the ones that are really keen on this. It's technically difficult to execute from a regulation perspective, so yeah, we've got to jump through a whole lot of hoops that is making it difficult and to be frank in the month we've all been Covid-19 focused. And so, the pathway to professionalism is, still there but just on hold at the moment.

Sherrie:

There's a bigger push right now. So, you know, there obviously have been some challenges as being a part of this board. Have there been any times where you've just sort of thought, okay, well this isn't my battle, I'm out of here. And you know, what have been sort of some of these struggles over the years?

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Leanne:

Trying to get the education and training reforms have, they were a massive challenge. Our previous minister, the minister we've gotten now **Minister Anderson** is great and he's very, very supportive and it's actually due to him that these training reforms have actually now actually being implemented. But the minister prior to him was more interested in having headlines about dodgy agents than actually doing anything productive to help get rid of the dodgy agents. And so that was incredibly frustrating for me. I'm used to dealing with people that are illogical and can kind of see okay, to get this outcome, these are the actions that we need to take. Whereas in this situation, there was, there was none of that and he actively worked against us, refusing to get the parliamentary council to write the regulations that had to be written for it to be implemented. And that was the most frustrating thing I've ever had to deal with in my life because on one hand he's wanting this outcome, but on the other hand, he's actively going the other way. And so, we had quite a very public "run ins", people in New South Wales would be aware of with the minister and I. I lost my mind at the awards night one year and told everybody exactly what I thought in front of 650 of my closest friends. But, you know, ultimately, yeah, ultimately, we've now got a minister who has helped us achieve a better outcome for everybody. And that is awesome.

Sherrie:

So I just want to touch on this because you know, certainly I could see and you know, I'm not a member of the REINSW. I'm a member of the REIQ living in Queensland. But you know, I do get a lot of the information from the REINSW because obviously I've been involved with various different keynotes, but I did see that there was a very strong stance around, you know, around the OFT and around the government and you know, what essentially kind of I saw was a lot being put in writing and it kind of was almost like an us versus them. But on top of all of that, I have also seen that there's been another battle and that other battle has been around, Okay, every single state has their own initiatives. And you know, for me as a practicing professional and working with, you know, agents all around Australia and New Zealand, I would love there to be a leveler in terms of, okay, if I'm buying a property in New South Wales, it's the same as Queensland and South Australia. You know, wouldn't it be wonderful if we had that? I see everyone kind of understands that this is an issue, but I don't really see anyone taking on that larger battle.

Leanne:

Don't you think I have enough to do Sherrie Storor! So, the whole concept of national legislation, I think is a really important one. But there was it was actually really before my time at REI, that that conversation was going on. And I know it absolutely fell apart, but what I would say to you is, unfortunately there are still a lot of people around, they've got a lot of self-interest and so they're not interested in collaboration and they're not interested in giving, because you can't always get your own way when you're talking about that. I think there's got to be a better way of doing it then than there is now. I think there should be national legislation. I think they should be national licensing. I believe in all of that. Whether that's a conversation that will happen during my time as president. I finish in November 2021 and I will not be coming back for a repeat performance, I deserve a rest after this, but I do think it's a conversation that will be had again at some stage. I just don't know when.

Sherrie:

Well I think exactly as you say, there's only so much that you can do and only so many battles that you can, you can pick. And certainly, you know, I've seen this, I know I've tried to take the battle up and you know, you've got to pick those issues that you feel that you can really work towards and work on.

Leanne:

And there is also the right time, timing is really, really important. And relationships at the right level of government are really important as well. And that is, you know, if I've learnt anything, it is that relationships are everything, even when it comes to getting assistance at a government level. So, if you've got those right relationships, that's when it's the right time to actually make massive change happen.

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Sherrie:

And this is a great time for building those relationships. So, you know, right now we're in the disruption phase in terms of the Covid-19. So, what do you think agents, you know, will really need resource wise in order to, you know, work through this Covid crisis?

Leanne:

A telephone!

Sherrie:

A telephone, I love that. But also, you know, this is not just going to be affecting us in terms of the health crisis. You know, we've got this looming economic crisis, it's already hitting us now and as we were talking about earlier, it's hitting some agents more than others right now, but we know in 3, 6, 12 months it is going to be extremely challenging. So, what resources do you think agents need to get them through this time?

Leanne:

Well they certainly need to be having conversations with as many people as they can, but not about, you know, are you willing to buy and sell? I mean, it's time for empathetic conversations, isn't it? It's time for just having conversations with the people in your community. It is about having that understanding that it is going to be a challenging time. Maybe not, you know, most of our agents have got settlements still happening sort of throughout April, May and some even in June. But come June, July, August. It is going to be challenging and we need to accept that that is reality and understand what we've got to do to get through that time. But also understand that there is an end to this and the people that are doing, making the calls now, developing the relationships now doing the work, whatever that looks like for you now are the ones that are going to actually be able to start to skyrocket out because I think that there's going to be a lot of activity.

We had a conversation this morning with **Rik Rushton** and he's like, August is the new spring and that's when things are going to get really, really busy. And one thing that he did say, which I thought was really cool was in two years' time, what are the things that you're going to regret that you didn't do during this time when you have got the time? For me I need to get my inbox under control instead of having 42 and a half thousand emails and two and a half thousand unread. That is going to be, that's my commitment to you right now Sherrie, that is going to be under control by the end of this whenever that is.

Sherrie:

Well that's truly surprises me because I noticed that you're very good on emails and you always come back to people very, very quickly. But I think, you know, there's a number of different points that you touched on there. The first one is actually about picking up the phone and actually having an empathetic conversation, a conversation with people and that the conversation needs to change. And you know, for me, I feel incredibly frustrated when I see a lot of agents are out there still trying to list and sell. Now, there are genuinely people who do need to list and sell right now for whatever personal reasons and will choose to do that. But there is also a large portion of the market who will actually choose to wait during this time. And so us coming across as an industry of like list now the market's great or we've got lots of buyers coming out is not the right message to be sending. People are smarter than this. So you know, we need to support those people who do need to list and sell, you know, understand that we need to take a hit like every other industry has, whether it be retail, aviation, tourism, hospitality, whatever it is and suck it up. Now we do have a lot more free time so we can work on projects such as your inbox, listing presentations. But I also think it's about the mindset too. And through Covid and I'm talking with a lot of different agents who aren't saying this publicly, but they are feeling sad. They are doing what needs to be done, but they are feeling genuinely sad. 2020 was their year and we had floods, we had fire and we've now had Covid and then economic crisis. So, it was like this was shaping up to be like one hell of a year and sure it's delivered but in a completely different way. So, I think it's ok to be sad. You know, we are grieving for, you know, for the loss of what was going to be of what we did have and what is happening with our family and our homes and our loved ones and

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people who can't necessarily go overseas to see their families or people who are losing money in their shares and their super there is incredible loss that's happening at the moment. So, I think we need to be sensitive to that and move forward. You talk about the biggest opportunity there in terms of working with people and having those conversations. And I think again, you know, this is a message that I keep rolling out. It's a message that you keep rolling out. I really hope that that is one of the big points that's taken from today.

Leanne:

And just one more thing I've been saying repeatedly over the last couple of weeks and we need to focus on what we can do, not on what we can't do because we are all in the same situation. That is the reality, the entire world. How often does that happen? Right? The entire world is in exactly the same situation and it's okay to feel sad. It's okay to feel sorry for yourself, but give yourself a time limit if you really need to cry, okay, give yourself three minutes and have a good old cry and then just give yourself an upper cut and get back on with it and focus on what you can do because we will get through this.

Sherrie:

Exactly right. And I think sometimes it's by letting those emotions out gives you the opportunity to gather the strength to move on. It's when you don't really acknowledge the space that you're in, you keep trying to plow through it, that you really don't manage to do any anything that's kind of productive.

But look, let's talk about some really great things for you and that is that you won last year that the women in real estate, the most influential woman in real estate at the realestate.com AREA awards. What did this accolade mean to you?

Leanne:

Yeah, that's a really interesting question, last year won about, I don't know, four or five awards. It was a really interesting year and I'm still not exactly sure how I feel about these women in real estate awards to be frank, I've written a lot of blogs on it and I had somebody actually send me a message say congratulations Leanne, who's the most influential man in real estate. And I'm like, yeah, I get it, I completely get it, but that's not really the point because there are still, as you well know, there are still plenty of women who don't necessarily have the confidence that you and I have to go out and make things happen for themselves. But if they can see people like you and I actually achieving things on a wider stage it helps them, it helps them to see people and hear people that have got stories that are a bit more like their own rather than you know, the blokes that jump out of there, you know, Aston Martins and don't wear socks with their suits. There's a need for diversity. Everybody's got a different story. Everybody relates to things differently. And so, we need all of our voices up there and all of us being seen. And so I guess really for me, I was really appreciative and honored that the judges who I think you might've been one of them, thought that my story was worthy of winning that award, but it just, yeah, it just gives all of us an opportunity to strive for something a little bit greater than what we're doing right now, I think.

Sherrie:

and you know, has really made a difference. And Leanne, I do see you, you know, as an inspiration, as an icon, you know, in this industry that is welcoming change. But you know, for so long there just hasn't been enough champion of women in terms of our skill sets. But even just having women that say, hey, listen, that's just like me. You know, I've got those same problems too. I can't do it in this particular way, or I do it this way because it works for me and it feels right for me. So, I think, you know, it's this embracing of challenges and skillset and celebrating them is very important. I must admit, like you, I probably didn't always see that there was an issue for women in real estate. I did it because I was always successful in my own career. I had my own agencies, you know, had my own sort of powerful positions as you have. I didn't see that it was a problem and it was only after really getting, you know, involved, that I understood that okay, it may not be an issue for me, but there are issues for others and

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it's my understanding that this is also how the real women in real estate came about and the catch up with the property girls' events came about Is that right?

Leanne:

Yeah, you're absolutely right. So that was, gosh, I'm starting to lose control of the years, about five years ago now. For a couple of years, I'd had a number of women that in and around my own team that had said to me, you know, they wanted to do an event for women. And I'm like, I didn't even go to the REI within the state conferences. I actively avoided all of that sort of thing because I didn't understand it. I didn't feel I needed it, I didn't see the point. And so that's what I kept saying to these women around me saying, but what would we do there? Why would we do that? And they're like, Oh, Leanne, you can have champagne and I'm like, ok if I can have champagne, let me see what I can do.

So after two years of nagging, I sent an email out to about a dozen women that I knew that had networks of women working for them and said do you think this is a good idea? And so, it's two weeks later, we had a group of 65 women come to our first event in Sydney. And that really took me by surprise. So, I just stood back and went, okay, I might not get this, but there's obviously some kind of need out there. And I had **Maria Findikakis** from **Eview Group**, she flew up from Melbourne for that first event and of course she you know looking after that network down in Victoria. I had people come from Perth. It absolutely blew my mind how quickly that group actually took off. And it was a real lesson for me just because I don't need it. It doesn't mean there's not a need and it doesn't mean, you know, and I feel like I have the ability and the opportunity to make a difference in this space. I can put these things together, I can make this happen and so damn it, I will.

Sherrie:

Well, you've certainly created a movement and I know that a lot of women, are very grateful and thankful for what you've built. And it's really nice to have these events. So, I'm looking forward to them perhaps later in the year or next year. But look, there's one more thing that I would like to touch on very briefly and that is, you know, about this typical impostor syndrome that we all, you know, do suffer from, but very rarely do we publicly acknowledge. And I just want to talk about a conversation that you and I had and I'm not sure if you remember it, but I congratulated you on being recognised as one of the most influential people in in New South Wales. And I remember you sort of saying to me, I can't believe that I'm on this list with all of these other people. And I'm thinking here is this like powerhouse of a person who is literally having impostor syndrome going, I can't believe that they're putting me in the same ranks as these other people. And one of the biggest kind of notions that I see in working with agents and agencies is this impostor syndrome where we think that we're not good enough. And I think it's encouraging to hear that we all feel it, myself included, yourself included, that we're not the only ones who do feel from it. And, I think when you have those moments, how do you deal with it? Do you just tell yourself, stop being silly and, and change your mindset and move on or what do you do?

Leanne:

It depends on what it's about. So, I've had plenty of those moments over time. I mean right back to when I was promoted to general manager, I didn't see myself as a leader. I saw myself as a good number two. And so, I just, in that situation I had a lot of people around me who I had faith in, who I believed in. And if I decided that, if they saw me that why then maybe I should start seeing myself the way that they see me. So certainly, you know, getting the most influential woman, you know, winning all those awards last year, it took me by surprise. It humbled me. But you also have to look at yourself the way other people see you and you do have, yeah, that kind of changes it. I still don't, I was still surprised to see myself on that, you know, top hundred most influential people in new South Wales, that still shocks me to be frank, but I think just being open to seeing yourself, how other people see you.

SHERRIE STOROR

Sherrie:

So, looking back on your career now, what would you, I mean, we've talked about some of the accolades and some of your achievements, but what are you proudest of?

Leanne:

I'm proud of a lot actually and typically when you when you think of the things that you're most proud of, they're the things that have been hardest, the things that you've worked the hardest to achieve and so I'm really proud of the fact that I went back to uni and did my MBA while I was working full time. I'm really proud of the fact that I am president of REI and have been asked to stay for a second term. That really meant a lot to me that the board had enough faith in me and I'm proud that I've been able to spend 25 years working at such an incredible organisation like Laing+Simmons.

Sherrie:

Love it. So final piece of advice for agents, agencies and business owners that are out there listening and you know a are wanting to affect some kind of change into their business right now, whether it be systems and structures, whether it be you know, mindsets or you know, really capitalising on those opportunities out in the marketplace. What would you tell them?

Leanne:

I would tell them first to get clear on what it is that you want to achieve? Exactly what is it that you want to do? When do you want to do it by what are the resources that you need? And then set aside some time, like make meetings with yourself, set aside some time to actually do whatever it is that you need to do. Whether it is making calls, whether it is, do research, whether it is learning new skills, whether it's to do a better job of your presentations or your systems. There's so much opportunity to do things right now, but you need to be clear on what it is that you want to do and then just make it happen. Just like that, make it happen!

Sherrie:

Love it. So, Leanne, for those who have, who have enjoyed today, who want to continue following your journey, where will they find you on social media?

Leanne:

Oh, like everybody, I'm everywhere. I'm on Instagram. I am @theleannepilkington. On Facebook, Leanne Pilkington and yes, LinkedIn, Twitter, all the same, I'm easy to find.

Sherrie:

Wonderful. Leanne, thank you so much for being so open and honest with us today for talking about, you know, all of the adversity, overcoming changes and challenges. It's been wonderful to have you a part of the program.

Leanne:

Thanks so much. I really appreciate the opportunity.

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Thanks for listening!

SHERRIE STOROR

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