

On Top Of Their

Good listeners, great relationship builders and detail oriented. These are the assets women typically bring to the real estate industry, as this role-model quartet attests.



Rachel Barnes

Rachel Barnes, Property Women

After 20 years in banking, working her way up from teller to first female executive manager at the Police Credit Union in South Australia, Rachel Barnes was able to retire from the workforce by the time she hit her mid-40s. Having advised hundreds of clients over the years about property finance, she had learned sufficiently along the way to leave the workforce considerably wiser and wealthier.

Today, as one of five directors of Property Women, a nationwide company that educates women about the benefits of property assets, she's embarked on a second career – one that has galvanised her out of her so-called "retirement". Barnes laughs gustily as she admits that she's working hard once again, this time to achieve new goals. "I want to positively impact the lives of thousands of people," she says earnestly. "I want to help people to realise their goals and show them that dreams are achievable".

Sounds grandiose? Well, not really, when you consider that Barnes has bought 75 properties in the past decade – and currently holds a personal portfolio well in excess of \$7.5million. "My strategy is simple", she says. "I invest in modest, low-cost properties after often lengthy, extensive research to gauge long-term potential; and then leave them in the hands of a good property manager. It can be time-consuming initially to decide on whether a property is worth buying, but it's time well spent. I also tend to hold on to the properties for a long time. The goal is to enjoy a passive income, with

compounding returns, for the rest of my life".

Barnes imparts her philosophies at Property Women's seminars around the country. Launched two years ago in recognition of women's booming interest in property acquisition, the company helps women to leverage what they have to their financial advantage.

And Barnes knows what she's talking about. "I wish I had known years ago what I know now", she says ruefully. Marriage, child rearing and divorce all got in the way initially and she wishes now that she had listened earlier to her instincts. "I think too many people don't value their feelings and desires. By devaluing themselves, they devalue their dreams.

"So many people tell me that they had wanted to invest in real estate for years, but they hadn't because someone had talked them out of it. I tell them they should only spend time with people who give them positive energy - and who are happy to help them achieve".

A great believer in real estate as a positive way to create personal wealth, thereby paving the way for the home, business or holiday of one's dreams, Barnes has even bigger property goals for herself in the future. She's currently travelling overseas in search of a boutique hotel portfolio.

"We're not struggling to find the properties; we're struggling to find the finance, following the sub-prime crisis in the USA. With proper research, a clear strategy and the right lending partners however, I believe anything is possible".

Game

Amber Werchon, Amber Werchon Property

Amber Werchon is only 25, but she's won every conceivable industry prize – and then some. Having consistently racked up sales turnover figures to make any competitor blanch, it comes as no surprise to hear that the Sunshine Coast dynamo has now opened shop under her own name. With a "small" start-up team of 24 - many who followed her when she left Ray White, Maroochydore, earlier this year - the often-crowned Queensland Salesperson of the Year reports that her agency's business outlook is bright, notwithstanding the overall financial landscape.

"Buyers have more choice now than they have had in years so properties tend to stay on the market longer. But the volume of sales is there".

She says it's plain hard work and at the end of the day – as usual – that determines success. "One of the biggest misconceptions about real estate is that it's easy to make money, or that 'it's a career you do if you don't know what else to do'. Nothing could be further from the truth, the vivacious go-getter points out. "You have to have a unique array of skills, especially to make it in any market! Most of all, you have to be able to continually adapt to changing circumstances, and you need to be always one step ahead".

Recently engaged and planning to marry within the next six months, Werchon wants to make good on a career vision she had when she left school. "When I began working as a receptionist in

an agency after Year 12, I had this image of myself being in sales and running my own show. From Day One, that was always my plan".

The Sunshine Coast self-starter has seen a lot of changes in the industry in the relatively short time that she's been in business.

"Eight years ago, owners had held onto their properties for years while enjoying very little capital growth. A couple of years later the boom came and everyone was selling and making money. Recently, times are definitely tougher. People are more stressed – and that makes our job even more demanding".

Werchon attributes her success to her chameleon-like nature. "What's key in this business is building relationships with your clients. That means

identifying what kind of relationship the client wants. Some clients want a business-like relationship, so you put on your business hat. Other clients want a friend or confidante, so you become that. And others want continual reassurance".

She leans in closer to make her point. "In real estate, you're dealing with people's expectations on a daily basis. All too often, there's a difference between what clients want to hear – and what you may have to tell them. If you can master the skill of dealing with people's emotions, without it taking its toll on you, you're on the right track".

Amber Werchon



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