Podcast 2 – Andrew Docwra – Property Management Recruitment

In our latest podcast we interview Andrew Docwra, Associate Director of One Property Recruitment to discuss all things property management recruitment from what qualifications are expected for Property Managers, Junior Property Managers and Client Accountants, through to what benefits are commonplace in the industry. Below you will find a transcript of the interview with Andrew, alternatively, you can watch the full interview above.

**Michael Paul:** [00:00:00] Good morning. as you now know, my name's Michael.

I'm the Managing Director of Strangford Management Limited. and today we're back with another interview, with a key industry personnel in the block management industry sector. this morning we are going to be talking all about staffing requirements and what qualities you need and all those sorts of things.

So we have invited Andrew Docwra. he's an associate director of One Property Recruitment to join us. and he's gonna talk us through, talk to us all about staffing. Welcome to the show.

**Andrew Docwra:** Thanks for having, me. Lovely to be here. Pleasure. Thank you very much.

**Michael Paul:** Andrew has worked with us for years now in staffing Strangford Management.

So, he certainly knows a lot and he's got wide network, of people that, you know, good talents that, that we've certainly hired in the past, and currently. So yeah, he's a good person to know and have a chat with. So let's get into it. It's obviously been a really interesting two, three years, COVID years.

 in the job market. And, I'd love to hear your thoughts [00:01:00] on how it's kind of changed. I know we worked together sort of pre what it was, 2020. . with Covid, so, you know, I know we worked together then and, and certainly worked together now, and there has been sort of a lot of changes. So it'd be great to hear your opinions on how that has changed over the last two, three years.

**Andrew Docwra:** Sure. Well, it's the, the interesting thing I'll lead off with is that the the Covid period was probably the busiest. Yeah. In terms of recruitment and in terms of the leasehold residential market mm-hmm. Residential leasehold market that we worked, which led to, well, it led to a lot of changes, I think.

 the, the obvious one is the home working. Yeah, I know that's probably quite a boring place to start. Yeah. And it's, it's, it's driven the market massively, in the last two and a half years, but just as a result of people knowing they can work from home, the ability to be able to set up, you know, for you employees.

Sure. as an employer, to have people working from home. It was a, a proof that that could happen and you could have trust in people and it's a sector that you can do that. You know, you've got the ability, there's certain things that, you know, you need to be out and about and you, you can't work from home.

But certainly within block management and leasehold management, [00:02:00] that was certainly an area and something that's changed massively. Okay. since, yeah, since the change of Covid,

**Michael Paul:** have you, have you seen sort of. I know other industries talk to other sort of owners and directors of companies that there has been sort of, quite an exodus with good talent leaving the industry, but also bad talent leaving the industry.

Mm-hmm. What have you seen in that respect? Have you seen, have you seen sort of a lot of great people coming into it or anything that's sort of pattern wise that, that you've seen over the last couple years?

**Andrew Docwra:** Definitely. In terms of people coming into the market, I think there's now a huge knowledge gap.

Okay. Because of, because of Covid. Sure. Because of. But my opinion and my stance on it is that junior people that are coming into the industry need to be in the office as much as possible. Okay. They need to get the exposure to the more senior people to, to learn. Yeah. and I think that, you know, COVID wasn't a choice of you having staff work from home.

Yeah. It, you know, it was, it was a must, it was a law. so I think as a result, people in the last two years that have been coming into the sector, there is now a knowledge gap because they haven't received the training, haven't received the [00:03:00] exposure that they should have, working in the office. your other point there, Good people leaving the industry.

**Michael Paul:** I suppose it's define, define what good people would be, but you know, I suppose people who are very experienced, we've seen kind of a lot of very experienced people or certainly I've seen a lot of experienced people leaving to maybe try other industries.

**Andrew Docwra:** Yeah, I think it was, it's a, it's a 50 50 split.

Okay. I think some people are leaving the industry, like you say, to try something new. They've probably reached their shelf life within the sector and decided that, you know, it's time to move on for the natural progression. I think the other half of that is definitely people leaving the industry because of the stress.

Yeah. that, that was inflicted on them during covid. I think that. During that time because you couldn't go out because you couldn't, you know, you couldn't live your social life. Block managers were receiving a lot of distress from, from the general public, you know, it was one of those things where you were sat at home, you could pick out leaks, your light bulbs, your roof, whatever, whatever was going on.

Yeah. It was all directed at the block manager, and that was a release [00:04:00] of stress for people during that, that covid time. So I think that has, A certain percentage of the, the market deciding that, you know, this is no longer for them. Sure. There's, there's too much pressure, there's too much stress, and, and as a result they're, you know, they're looking to move on.

Definitely.

**Michael Paul:** Yeah. Cause you know, I know this is probably like recruitment, you know, block management is quite a sociable industry. you know, there's lots of events going on, I guess. During Covid, if, if that wasn't able to happen, then like you said, the, the release side of it wasn't really there. So you're generally just getting kind of the stressors without the release side of it.

Yeah. which, you know, I can imagine saw a lot of people sort of saying, Hey, you know what, there's, there's other options for me. And, and, and you know, let's be honest as well, there's a lot of transferrable skills, you know, from whatever, a property manager, an accountant, or even a junior. I think there's a lot of transferrable skills to other industries.

You know, you can apply to, so. Mm-hmm. You know, I think there's a lot of options or were a lot of options sort of available. So it's interesting to kind of hear. You know, your opinion on, on how many people have left, and it sounds like it's just more of a smaller segment rather than, you know, mass [00:05:00] exodus we saw in other industries.

**Andrew Docwra:** Yeah, I think so. And I think there's a, there's other factors as well that are now playing into, which probably go onto about like the fire safety regulations. Mm-hmm. The building safety bill, all, all that sort of stuff as well is contributing to people now looking elsewhere. Sure. within the market, but certainly looking at, at, at Covid, yeah, I'd say it was a first bit.

Okay. and I, and I don't think that's just within block management. I think a lot of other industries suffered as well. Yeah. but you know, the, the, the role as a block manager is, you know, you've done it and you've now run a business within it. It, it, it is stressful and there are times where, you know, you do get a, a lot of abuse or a lot of complaints and, and that, you know, multiplied two, three fourfold, like you say, without the release,

it, it's tough. Yeah, it's tough. and I think, like I say, that applies to any job and any sector you're in during covid, but particularly within leasehold management, the, you know, the, I dunno what word I'm looking for, the nature of the job. Sure. And, and what that sort of entails multiplied does, does make it more difficult.

Yeah. and I think people were, felt it harder, felt it a lot harder.

**Michael Paul:** Yeah. Yeah. That's understandable as well. I [00:06:00] mean, this is a good segue, to. What new roles you've seen? Probably more so in the last year, I guess than, than than three. But, you know, talk to us a little bit about what you now see companies creating some new departments mm-hmm.

Or new job roles mm-hmm. And things like that. Mm-hmm. What have you seen come up

**Andrew Docwra:** the, the, the biggest and the most glaring one is, is around compliance. Mm-hmm. And fire safety regulations. Sure. I certainly haven't seen, well, anything like it in the last six months is probably a fair time scale because of what's gone on in the sector.

Because of the new laws, because of the new regulations. There is now a requirement that, you know, these buildings that are over a certain height, do you know, they, they do require this qualified person, this skilled person. And whether you outsource that and go external, or do it internally, it is something you now need to do and now need to react to.

So I think the, the fire safety, FRA's fire. Risk assessors, fire safety officers are something that are being created.

**Michael Paul:** Brand new departments brand

**Andrew Docwra:** literally. and [00:07:00] again, I think the smaller businesses don't necessarily have the resource and the money to be able to bring it in house, but we certainly saw going back further than six months, certainly saw the bigger.

Managing agents, be ahead of the curve, you know, 12, 18 months ago, looking at bringing their head of health and safeties. And they're probably gonna use that as an opportunity, as an additional revenue stream for the smaller business that needs to outsource it. but that is the one role that I've seen created, you know, so, so much.

Yeah. in, in the last six months particularly. Yeah. And that's across. Across the smaller managing agents, the larger companies, just because of where the market's at.

**Michael Paul:** Yeah, definitely. I suppose that that brings in kinda all new qualifications and skill sets and, and, and yeah. I'm sure you're saying sort of six months ago this kind of was created ish.

Mm-hmm. You know, I suppose now you're in the thick of it and, and you kind of got used to, you know, what you're really looking for and, and types of people, personalities that would fit that sort of sector. Mm-hmm. But I guess from, from a standstill point of view, it's almost, it's almost quite difficult to.

Create these, [00:08:00] you know, these, these job roles and sort of say, Hey look, this is the job spec for this. Mm-hmm. And this is the type of person we're looking for, you know, with, with little to no history. Mm-hmm. You know, you could, I suppose, go after risk assessors, but the private risk assessor going into block management, dunno if that's happened a lot.

 I feel like it's probably more of a trainable job, you know, someone with certain qualifications mm-hmm. And then train them into it as opposed to, you know, getting a risk assessor and, and just transferring them industries.

**Andrew Docwra:** Yeah. The, the NEBOSH fire mm-hmm. Is a, is a big qualification that was highlighted, again, probably when this first came about.

Sure. How much companies are still looking at that? Yeah, it is, is questionable. Okay. I think NEBOSH is definitely not necessarily the, the, what the NEBOSH general certificate versus the NEBOSH fire qualification. Yeah. is, is probably more in the limelight now. in terms of getting that person on. But something that was, was quite interesting was a lot of demand for, firemen or fire officers that have worked in the, the fire brigades.

Okay. Because they're actually qualified and they've done, well, again, during the time of Grenfell, which was [00:09:00] 2017, so you know, Good few years ago. Now, at that time there were a lot of people within the London Fire Brigade that were bought in as consultants and as the resource for the fire brigade, and probably for the government as well.

Right. So there was a real demand. But again, that market's now been saturated massively. Yeah. There, there wasn't a huge amount of skilled individuals, within the space, which have now gone, you know, to these roles that have been created. Now we're fishing in a pool of candidates, which aren't necessarily skilled within the sector, because there's no history of it, like you say. Yeah, absolutely. but that, yeah, the, the fire brigade was an interesting one. Something not something I expected at all. Yeah. Not something I expected at all.

**Michael Paul:** That is really interesting. and were, so you were technically going in and picking out risk assessors from say, the London Fire Brigade and transferring them into sort of large managing agents and Yeah.

**Andrew Docwra:** Yeah. And they were the, they were the people because they were the people that had been involved for Grenfell. Yeah. Parti, I mean, particularly in London. Yeah. Just because of, you know, the, the, the geographical location of where Grenfell happened Sure. And particularly people in the London Fire Brigade, but there was a, a very, very [00:10:00] small pool of talent that had the, the skillset mm-hmm.

And the knowledge of what had gone on to be able to then apply that to, to one of these sort of, well as they class external roles and going to work directly for, for a managing agent. Now, again, it's a, a fair split between the market, I think due to, if we link back into what we said about the knowledge gap.

Mm-hmm. And there was a lack of injection of talent into the market in the last, probably two years when Covid was going on. We're now in a place where clients can't necessarily demand, you know, a block manager three years experience AIRPM qualified at the desired salary. Right. I think clients are definitely being a little bit more open-minded now.

Okay. And looking at that sort of boots on the ground experience, for example, you might have a block manager manage a portfolio of two years, not necessarily qualified yet, but could still demand the salary that somebody qualified could with less experience. Yeah. But I mean, your standards here, say MIRPM, AIRPM, CIH is another one that I've seen a lot, which is Chartered Institute of Housing. Mm-hmm. and that again, ties in, there's apprenticeship schemes, which you can do as, as property [00:11:00] managers. Sure. Which all tied in get you either. Your associates or your members to the I R P M and your Chartered Institute of Housing or Housing or M C I H, which is your membership to the Chartered Institute of Housing?

Yeah. All in one go. the housing qualification isn't necessarily a requirement, but I think it's really, really good that that property managers have that on their cv. Yeah, because it shows a desire to. To, to better yourself. Yeah. which I think as an employer is, is, is massive when you're hiring.

**Michael Paul:** Do you think this, this might be an awkward question, but I'm gonna ask it anyway.

 do you think that these source of qualifications you just talked about do lead to a, an increased salary or is it just, they're more attractive as a person going for a role. Just see kind of any patterns or say actually, yeah. You know, if you've got your members, then, then yeah, you, we see sort of a five, a 5,000 pound or bump in salary usually.

**Andrew Docwra:** that's interesting. So some of my clients will offer that. Some of, some of the, some of the market will offer that, that they'll offer salary supplements as you become qualified, which I think is really good. [00:12:00] But again, I think linking back to how talent short the market is, yeah, you run a real risk of not being able to attract the right people, at, at the required salary levels.

 I certainly think that yes, it is, is the answer in terms of you will open yourself up to higher salary brackets if you are associates qualified and again, members qualified. Yeah. I think it's more relevant to the MIRPM, to the members qualification. I think as soon as you hit that you are gonna access the higher salary brackets within the market.

Yeah. But a higher percentage than, than your associates. Sure. definitely. Yeah.

**Michael Paul:** So it's not just a case of, you know, people taking the exams and qualifications just to support their role. It can make some, you know, financial, you know, implication on, on their sort of day-to-day, earnings as well. I think that's, you know, that's important to.

To recognize and then to say to people as well, you know, it's not just, it's not just you're doing this just to help the company and support the company, it's no actually has some personal benefit to it as well.

**Andrew Docwra:** Definitely. And I think it's important now that property managers and people within the industry realize that, you know, the sector as a whole, as we spoke about the, [00:13:00] the fire regulations, the, that, that sort of stuff that's going on, it's becoming more and more regulated to the sector.

So I think. Well, as a, as a candidate within the market and as somebody that is looking to, to better themselves, you should, you should definitely go out and you should become qualified. It's, you know, yeah. It's, it's only gonna go one way. And, and that one way is do as many qualifications and become as qualified as you can.

Yeah. within the sector, because it's getting more and more regulated,

**Michael Paul:** I think. A hundred percent. I think, you know, there's been, there's been talk for, such a long time about regulation and, and you know, even licensing, I remember there was a whole talk about licensing agents and things, much more like a sort of American model.

And yeah, I think, I think this is only going one way. It doesn't, it doesn't start to go back and deregulate and all those sorts of things. So I think, yeah, I think that's an important point to say. Leaving property managers and maybe juniors aside from it for a minute, what about accountants?

So I don't wanna leave them out cuz you know, I feel like the industry tends to leave them out a bit. But, you know, certainly with accountants, what do we see there? Do you say, see kind of, you know, a specific qualification necessary or degree levels or something like that? [00:14:00]

**Andrew Docwra:** Qualifications within accounting are a definitely more set in stone, I think, in terms of the salaries.

And you, you can basically hit a ceiling without being qualified within accounting, and, and that is a a lot more apparent within accounting versus property management. Okay. I think entry level people, what you're, you're looking for and what we're looking for when we're, we're putting people into these entry level roles, it's usually a degree Yeah.

Within accounting and finance. as a minimum Bachelor of Arts. Yeah. Yeah. Honours. there's, there's probably a minim and again, put putting it to a, an employer's point of view, basically you're hiring somebody. If you're hiring somebody that is coming into the sector without any degree, any backing or foundation within accounting and finance, it's gonna take them a lot longer to become qualified.

Right. Whereas those entry level people that are coming in with their degree Yeah. And they've only got, I think they get eight or nine exemptions in terms of exams, so they've only got four or five, which they can probably do within a year, 18 months. Dependent on the study support and the setup with the company Sure.

To then become qualified, which again, [00:15:00] plays both sides for you. Having qualified accountants within your team is fantastic. Yeah. It's gonna allow you to grow. But from a candidate's perspective, equally they're gonna be able to access the highest salary brackets and grow quicker within the sector. but that being said, I mean, there's plenty of people that come into the industry that don't have the, the degree.

Yeah. And, and, and fly. It just takes a little bit longer for sure. but I'd certainly highlight the facts with the salaries. If I compare the two. If you look at a property manager that, for example, as worked for five years isn't qualified, yeah, they can still access those highest salary brackets. I think if you look at an accountant that's not qualified, They're gonna struggle to get themselves into the higher, higher bandings.

**Michael Paul:** That's a good point. I feel like that makes sense. you know, I, I do see it as, from my perspective, I, I think I see it as, as property management is a lot more of a sort of problem solving, Industry job, whereas accountancy is very technical, so it's, it's almost, you know, yes or no in accounting. Whereas there's, there's, you know, could be a million different solutions to, to the problem when it comes to property management.

So it's, it's, it's almost easier [00:16:00] to say. Hey, you know, accountants, you've got this qualification or you don't have this qualification. Mm-hmm. And we'll allow you that. Whereas there seems to be a lot more to take into consideration when it comes to property managers. Mm-hmm. And actually, like you said, the experience, the boots on the grounds, like how much exposure has that person had to things that go wrong.

Mm-hmm. And how did they solve them? Mm-hmm. So, you know, I think it's, it's important to, to, you know, have that distinction. And, and it's a good point to raise

**Andrew Docwra:** it all. It all loops back as well. It loops back into to. The lack of talent and the knowledge gap within Sure. Within property management, I think it's hard to restrict people in terms of the salaries that they wanna earn.

Sure. I think if you look at it from an employer, if you're looking for a block manager, you've got a portfolio that he's running, you bringing in a property manager that's got five years experience that isn't necessarily qualified. It, it's gotta be done. Yeah. At times. Because there's not enough strong talent that's come through the market in the last two years that you are gonna struggle finding that right person.

Yeah. So I think you'd be very, very limited in terms of restricting your pay grades at times. Sure. basing that on [00:17:00] qualifications, whereas accounting, I, I personally, I mean our team obviously recruit for, for finance, but I certainly don't see it as, Talent short. Yeah. I think there's a huge injection.

You've obviously got universities putting people through accounting and finance degrees and driving that, which probably leads into making it a lot more structured. Yeah. with the salaries as well.

**Michael Paul:** Yeah, definitely. I mean, I think, you know, the, I suppose the overall sort of arching point here is, you know, the emphasis on companies to, onboard people in the right manner and invest a lot more into people's growth and, and moving forward.

And I think it kind of begs the question of. What's, what do you think the industry can do better? And I say the industry is in sort of us rather than the recruiters. Mm-hmm. But what do you think that we could be doing better to attract talent from other industries? Not necessarily current property managers or client accountants, but you know, what could we be doing better in order to.

Attract other people to this industry to make it, you know, more [00:18:00] sexy or more, more, you know, more of a luxurious job that people really want to go into. Mm-hmm. do you have any ideas of, of what anyone could be, could be doing better?

**Andrew Docwra:** No, I think I, I do think that the industry needs to be promoted more. I, I, the, the one thing I will say about leasehold management and, and that I really do stand by is it's a very, very structured career path.

Yeah. I think. Kind of contradicting myself a little bit in terms of, we spoke about qualifications and the salary brackets, but I think there is a very, very clear career path. And for those entry level people that I'm placing into the market, I'm saying, you know, you come in as an assistant, as an entry level, you do, it depends on, on company, bear that in mind.

But anything from between 12 and 24 months as an assistant, you start to manage your own portfolio, become a junior block manager, and thereafter, there is a clear structure in terms of years versus salaries and, and how you can get there. So I think that the industry does need to be promoted more. Yeah. that, that would, yeah, that would definitely be one thing.

**Michael Paul:** I suppose we, we kind of need to do ourselves a favour. you know, I think we spend, we spend so much time. [00:19:00] You know, doing, doing the actual job itself, we're not necessarily promoting it, you know, just from one example, you know, I know our, our head of accounts , you know, he will go to, he'll go back and do speeches at his university.

 and we'll try and promote it so that, you know, it's, it's twofold. It's, it's promoting the industry but also is promoting Strangford Management, you know, because he's sort of saying, look, there's a very clear path, what you said. How we go from, you know, university graduate mm-hmm. Through to, you know, a full client accountant.

I think maybe that's something that we can do a little bit more. Mm-hmm. you know, and, and, and put more money behind and more attention and more focus to try and get more good talent at a younger age to say, actually, we can onboard you and train you and expose you to all these things. And like you said, it's a very structured, career path.

So definitely, you know, if it, if it's done right, then it can be great. Mm-hmm. It's, you know, I do feel that, that sometimes people fall into this industry for, I don't wanna say the wrong reasons, but, almost no reasons. They just say, Hey, [00:20:00] look, it seems to be okay. I'll give it a go. And then they'll end up there for 15 years.

Mm-hmm. And they, they sort of sit there and say, well, I don't really know what to do now. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. which is not, not saying that's bad, but it's not necessarily what I think the industry needs going forward. I think it almost needs a bit more structure to it and say, Hey, look, this is a viable industry.

Mm-hmm. It's a viable career path for you where you can make good money, have a good job, have a good life, have good work balance. you know, I think there's, there's possibly more we need to do as an industry to, to promote that level of, of, of, of, you know, career path.

**Andrew Docwra:** Yeah. And I think there are people that see the potential in, in moving into leasehold management.

Yeah. Especially, for example, people that are in property management managing ASTs. That that, sure, yeah. That again, is a sector that probably isn't promoted, is a good career path. Mm-hmm. But people certainly get to a point where they hit the ceiling within their, within AST property management and think, oh, You know, what can I go and do now?

Oh, property management. But I'll look at the leasehold sector and, and look at block management because again, they'll go and do the time that they've done within AST and they'll access the higher [00:21:00] salary bandings because Yeah, the, the, the money is a little bit better. Yeah. there is a little bit further to grow.

 it's a, it is a bigger industry than AST property management. so there is, there is potential for growth is, I can say. I think promoting it is a really, really big thing.

**Michael Paul:** Well, interestingly on that point as well. And then this might be a bit pie in the sky. You know, I think there's, there's something to be said for AST managers also get mildly exposed to the block management industry.

Mm-hmm. So they see bits and pieces of it from a fringe point of view. And I wonder if maybe doing that with other industries as well and just saying, Hey, you know, this is how this works. Mm-hmm. You know, you have, you know, autonomy to work with the clients and have a real impact on a building or development of people where they live and, and you know, where they rent out their buildings and all sorts of things like that.

And I think maybe. Actually opening the books up a little bit and sort of saying, here's how this all works. Mm-hmm. So here's what you can be part of. Mm-hmm. I think that might attract people as well. I think there's maybe not enough exploration saying, Hey, this is us, this is how we do things, and, and that's it.

[00:22:00] Rather than sort of saying, well, you know, get a qualification and come to us, or, you know, If you, if you think it's good and you've seen something online, then come to us as well and just falling into it, you know, I feel like it needs to be much more of a conscious choice. and those are the people that, that, you know, are the better ones to, to have.

Yeah, certainly. I know we've, we've recruited one or two recently that, have made a conscious choice to move from their industry because they've been exposed slightly to block management. Mm-hmm. And now they're thinking, okay, this is actually good. I like this. You know, I like this sort of level of control and, and liaison and, and people management and, and you know, that's what gets them excited and interested in, in doing that job.

Mm-hmm. And therefore changing the, their industry. But, I, I guess I, I don't think I see that enough. Mm-hmm. I've see it in lots of other industries, you know, glamorizing of, of, I know tech and creative industries, but not necessarily in, in block management enough. I think that's, that's something that we could definitely do better on.

**Andrew Docwra:** Yeah. And I think, I dunno how much you wanna speak about it, but in terms of the setup that you've got at Strangford Management and how you operate, I think that's certainly. [00:23:00] Something that other companies should look at, because I do think that candidates and property managers within the market are overworked at times, and I think they get to a stage where, again, it all goes back to there being a slightly talent short market.

You get people that move on, portfolios grow, candidates get overworked, and their portfolios grow and they move away from. The service element of the role in actually being there and getting to know their clients and delivering the service which they desire. Sure. And more a way to, to kind of, well move to firefighting.

Yeah. And I think that is certainly something for, for companies looking at attracting staff can review. Yeah. And getting that support network around people to, to basically enable them to do their job to, to. The best of their ability and enjoy it because property management should be enjoyable as you know, as you guys have got it.

It it, it should be, it should be not, fun, is probably the right word, but it should be enjoyable and it should be a job where you come in and you know, you know your clients and everybody's happy and, and the place is spinning. But yeah, I think there's a lot of pressure. There's a lot of pressure that builds within the sector, and it becomes, it becomes unmanageable.

**Michael Paul:** I think it's, it's, yeah. I [00:24:00] mean, you know, I don't, I don't wanna go fully into it, but, you know, I think from, from the way that we try and approach talent, we, we sort of try and approach talent acquisition the same way we try and approach client acquisition. Mm-hmm. And, and you know, we realize that we need to have people buy into a specific purpose, not just we have a job role and you fit that job role.

Mm-hmm. It's more a case for us that the, you know, we are kind of advertising and saying this is what ideal is for us. Mm-hmm. And then I know you and I have worked, you know, hugely on, on being almost ultra specific about, you know, what we're really looking for in terms of values and qualities of people as opposed to focusing all of our attention on, on qualifications.

Yeah. Yes. Certain levels it's important, but you know, I think, I think like we said, that the growing of individuals is. Is much more important for me and, and the way we've sort of structured it in terms of, you know, the, the, the pathways for progression and, and openly communicating that and, and proactively communicating that regularly.

Mm-hmm. I think that's, that's also important and that's led us to, you know, retaining staff in a better way and, and, [00:25:00] and training staff in a better way and saying, Here's the goalposts, you know, we'll help you and support you and guide you all the way through. But we're just saying that's what the end goal is.

Mm-hmm. And then people can buy into that purpose. Mm-hmm. And saying, well, I know I need to just get to here, and constant, that constant communication helps. but again, yeah, the, you know, the way, the way we are sort of structured is, is. I've, I've been there, I've managed the, the portfolios of 30 plus clients.

Mm-hmm. And, and you know, working sort seven in the morning till God knows what time of night and it's no fun. And, and you know, when I started Strangford, I was like, this, this has kind of gotta change. Mm-hmm. And, you know, we are very much going down the route of, you know, fewer clients per team, but you know, a higher fee.

Mm-hmm. And explaining that, to clients. I think more now, I think, I think maybe back in the sort of 2015's, 2016's, it was all volume, volume, volume. Mm-hmm. Whereas now I feel we're getting a lot more purchase from people who are having those conversations to say, you know what? We're not gonna be the cheapest.

Mm-hmm. A hundred percent. We, in fact, we're probably gonna be more expensive. Mm-hmm. But this is what you [00:26:00] get for that. And you'll get more time. You'll get more attention, you'll get more focus. The property manager teams will be happier. Yeah. Yeah. The clients will be happier cause they're getting more attention and you end up.

Five pounds more per person per month. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. You know, we're not talking staggering figures here. It's still probably half the price of a, a telephone contract. So, you know, I think there's, there's something to be said for, for, you know, again, advertising and, and opening the books and saying, we're not, we're not cheating you, we're not lying to you.

We're just trying to make it a fair and equal balance between what we need to do in order to make money as a business to exist. Mm-hmm. But also to be fair and equal with you because we need to manage your property properly. So I think it's, it's, yeah, it's a fine balance and, and I think, you know, the industry is sort of massaging its way through this whole field of, of trying to figure out what the best way to do it is.

And, and yeah, I'd love to say that, that, you know, we are doing it in a, in a, some special, unique way. But I dunno, is it the last. Is it the last version of us that exists? Probably not. We'll still keep evolving and developing and [00:27:00] see where we kind of go from there.

 I do wanna talk about your day-to day.

Mm-hmm. So, job interviews, getting people, job interviews. Mm-hmm. you know, your black magic around trickeries and what, what you tell people and, and, all those sorts of questions. What, what do you tell people? What do you advice, do you give them, what do you think people can do themselves before an interview mm-hmm. That will give them sort of the best chance of getting a job.

**Andrew Docwra:** This is a lovely self-promotion piece. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. No, I, I think, yeah, no, I, I think in terms of me and, and one property and, and as a whole, and this is how we operate. The, the, the biggest thing and, and the most success we are gonna get is getting to know you guys.

Okay. As our clients and getting to know our candidates, the. I know you, the more I know about you, and the more I know my candidates, the better matches, and the better sustainable placements I'm gonna make sure. so I think that's where it all, all the, the roots basically grow from, the more I know about exactly what you want, how you operate, whether.[00:28:00]

You know, the, the sort of personality of the person you're looking to hire for a particular team or this particular role, whether or not you want somebody that's qualified, whether, you know, you want somebody that's managed a project of this specific value or overseeing like a new build project where with developers or mobilization or all the, you know, kinda get really grainy with stuff like that.

Knowing all that information and then being able to have that to go to market, find the candidate, and then prepare a candidate for interview. Mm-hmm. I, I, I was gonna say back myself, I probably would put the level of preparation that we send over to candidates very, very high. Yeah. I'm, you know, I'll, I'll give candidates a week if not.

Two, three days to prepare. I'll be speaking to 'em every day to make sure they're happy. Any questions? And I think that, we're going for a little bit of tangent here.

**Michael Paul:** No, no, it's fine. I think it's, well, I think, you know, I think it's, it's let's you know, let's, let's touch on what you do in terms of, preparing candidates for an interview.

 I think it's great what you just said in terms of, [00:29:00] getting to know the clients Yeah. More as well. Mm-hmm. And I think that's, you know, just from our relationship, I think that's served us really well. Mm-hmm. and you know, I know we've done a lot of work on, on like personality types, like I said earlier, personality types and values mm-hmm.

And, and the type of person we're looking for as well. Mm-hmm. And now, you know, I'm, I'm happy and open to say that that. When we start to work on a job, we probably, we as a client, we probably get three cvs. Mm-hmm. And they're all very, very particular to a very, very specific request. Mm-hmm. So it's not a case, you know, it hawking back to years and years and years ago, but it's now not a case that you just end up saying, I've got a, a request for a property manager and you get 10 cvs.

Property managers. Mm-hmm. And it's like, that's great. But now it's more of a case of we actually want a very specific type of person working for us because they buy into a purpose that we're dealing with. How do you prepare people? So what do you do in terms of getting them ready [00:30:00] for an interview with, with us or with, with anybody else?

With any other client.

**Andrew Docwra:** So, no, I think it's a, it's a fine nine. Giving a candidate too much and, and obviously not giving them enough. Sure. but I think for me it's, it's seeing that a candidate has gone away to prepare. So I'll give them, you know, that two, three days. So I'll send 'em confirmation, everything is there.

That, that they can go in and look at and research. Sure. And then we'll speak again. we'll speak again usually the day before the interview just to make sure they don't have any final questions, queries anything about the position, anything about the role that they want to know. but at that time I'd quite like to see that the candidates prepped and I'll ask them a few questions around, you know, what you know about the company or, or what can you tell me that you've researched?

Yeah. And show that they've gone away and done that. Because ultimately, look it, I represent you guys as much as I represent, my candidates. Yeah. And I wouldn't wanna put a candidate forward for a role that hasn't taken the time to prepare, for example. Yeah. If I speak to them the day before, oh, I, I haven't prepared yet.

It's, it's a bit of a red flag for me. Yeah. but it's just, it, it's giving candidates confidence as well, I think. I [00:31:00] think there's too much self question in the world. in general, I don't think people back themselves enough. So you want people to be going into an interview, feeling they're confident, feeling they've got everything they need, not going in blind and, and ultimately feeling good.

You know, it's, it's. Their opportunity to make a first impression. So, yeah, it's, it's, it's a, this a people management piece, but you've, you gotta make people feel good about themselves and, and, and be ready to go. I, I think it's, you know, there's, it's, it's quite emotional. It's, it's a lot of emotion attached to it.

Yeah. I, I certainly get attached to my candidates, in, in times and in places and, and you want, you know, it's part of the job. I love seeing people do well. I love helping people out and seeing people succeed. I can only do, do so much for. You know, a lot of the job is them going in and doing the best they can.

They go in and do it. Great. You know, I'm, I'm really, really happy.

**Michael Paul:** Yeah, definitely. I think, I think something I'd, I'd credit to you guys as well is, is the level of preparation that people have, and then they turn up to the interview with, there's a much better [00:32:00] conversation that we have with people in general.

Mm-hmm. you know, there's a lot more of a dialogue back and forth and them asking, you know, relevant good questions, you know, about the future of the company and all sorts. And then, you know, even, even questions about me personally that they ask and you know, I think that's, people come across very authentically.

Yeah. And then they're less nervous because they have been prepared in a certain way.

**Andrew Docwra:** And to pause you on that, that's a very good point in terms of how that would come about. Yeah. And I wouldn't have listed off, you know, three or four questions to ask. Sure. I would say to candidates, please have some questions prepared at the end of the interview to ask.

Yeah. And then I'll run through them. You know, they say, Hey, well, you know, you've got a couple of questions for, for Michael, for example, and they'll give them to me. Mm-hmm. And I think, you know, that's really, really good. I haven't spoon fed them those questions, said, have some questions prepared. They've gone away and done it and shown by it.

And, and, you know, that's really, really important.

**Michael Paul:** I, I honestly don't think you could, I mean, most of the people that, that, you know, I've interviewed. The questions will organically come out of just the discussions that we're having. Mm-hmm. So, you know, people tend to not be afraid to sort of say, Hey, can we just focus on this point for a minute?

Mm-hmm. I've got a question. [00:33:00] And that's great for us to see. Mm-hmm. What's great for me to see, you know, I just want to see their most authentic self. I think not preparing people in the right way, I think tends to make people more nervous. and if people are more nervous, then they sort of clam up a bit. Mm-hmm.

And we don't actually see the most authentic version of them. Mm-hmm. Which is doing a, you know, discredit to them. And, you know, more often than not that won't really lead to a great interview, which will not really lead to a job offer, and we could be missing out on some great people. Mm-hmm. But they've just not been prepped or they've not prepped themselves in order to, to, you know, do the best they can.

So it's, it's, yeah, from my perspective, it's the better the prep the best of the interview and we'll get to the right person for the right job. So, you know, it's, it is hugely important. It's good to see, good to hear that you know, how you, how you go about it at one property.

**Andrew Docwra:** It's, it is a bit of a preach to the rest of the market as well in terms of clients that, you know, I either work with now or I haven't worked with.

Sure. Buy into your recruitment agencies, take the time to pick up the phone and have a tender [00:34:00] conversation with them. I've experienced it so many times in, in my years of doing recruitment where, like you said before, you're given instruction for a role. This is what I need, you know? Can we, can we jump on a call?

Can we have 5, 10 minutes just to, to go through in detail of what you're looking for, oh, sorry, I don't have time. Yeah. It makes the job so much harder and, and from a employer's perspective, you're gonna find a lot more frustrations, a lot more teething issues with your recruiters Yeah. And your agencies and your consultants because they don't know what they're looking for.

Yeah. You know, it's a, it is a very, very big broad market and there's so many different sectors of, of leasehold management and you can really, really hone in on exactly what you want. But take the time to brief consultants and, and let them know, this is exactly what they need and you'll work better with them.

I think that's really, really important. Yeah. Because without that information then it's really difficult to para a candidate for, you know, what, what the client are looking for.

**Michael Paul:** Yeah. No, that's a really good point to me. let's talk about everyone's favourite subject benefits. so, I know we touched on earlier the working from home, you know, is, is, is almost now a staple.

**Andrew Docwra:** It pains me well.

**Michael Paul:** yeah. I mean it's, there's [00:35:00] gotta, you know, I think there's gotta be a good balance and, you know, we've, we've. Gone through a few cycles of versions of working from home and things, but I guess. We also know working home and we all have different opinions on it, but what other benefits do you think are really important?

Or do they what? What benefits come up in conversations kind of regularly. Mm-hmm. Which people say, actually this is really important for me. Mm-hmm. Or this is really important.

**Andrew Docwra:** Goes back everything really now in the sector loops back into to covid Right. And periods of, of Covid and what happens. Sure.

Healthcare, is, is so, so keen now, private healthcare, yeah. Private healthcare, sorry. And dental care. Any, any, any of those sort of benefits? I think the strain that was put on the NHS in, in the time of the pandemic and, and thereafter, and, and that we've seen in more recent times as well mm-hmm. is, is leading a lot more, employees to be wanting those benefits that are gonna support them. Right. And a family from a healthcare perspective. Sure. yeah, that is something that I've [00:36:00] really, really seen change. Okay. it's a lot more, I think two years ago, three years ago, it used to be, I'm not saying that was irrelevant.

People still wanted that, but it's moved a lot more away from, you know, what's my salary and, and what are my, my days annual leave. Yeah. To what wider benefits do I get. Mm-hmm. and what more is included in the package? And I think that is definitely one of them. gym memberships. Okay. again, I think since the days of all the gyms closing down and not being able to go out and, and do fitness, I think that's important that, that companies help promote that.

But certain. What candidates been asking for as well. Yeah. to have that support around, you know, their, their mental health and their mental wellbeing and all that sort of stuff. You know, gym, gym memberships, plays into it. that is definitely.

**Michael Paul:** So it's all very much focused around sort of personal care and, and Exactly.

I think, you know, on the, on the gym membership thing, I think. A lot of people during lockdown. Yeah. I feel like almost the entire country was sort of bought into these, working from home. Mm-hmm. Sorry. Working out from home. Mm-hmm. [00:37:00] you know, the, the personal trainers online and there was such an availability or whether it was pushed onto you or not.

 you know, there was such an availability of, of resources there. To work out from, from home. Yeah. I feel like now coming back out of it, there's, there's almost more of a need for people to say, actually, you know what? I did really well over the last two years. I'm not just gonna stop. Mm-hmm. And, and carrying that on.

I think that's, that's, that's a big one to. You know, to make sure the people are, you know, healthy in body as much as in mind. cause I think they, you know, they play into each other. So it's interesting to hear that that's, you know, that's being requested as opposed to Yeah. You know, company saying, well, it's just a little side nice point that, hey will give you a gym membership.

It's actually, you know, what do, what do they do? People are asking for that upfront.

**Andrew Docwra:** It's just more, it's more, it's more buy-in from candidates wanna see now more buy-in from. From their employers. Sure. yeah. Is it all, it all stems back to the pandemic. Yeah. And, and you know, there were people being furloughed, people being made redundant, [00:38:00] everything like that from, from an employee's perspective.

Yeah. You've gotta bet that mind now. you, yeah. You have to.

**Michael Paul:** Yeah, definitely. So working from home healthcare, gym memberships or general looking after your body a bit more. Is there anything else that sort of seems to come up regularly?

**Andrew Docwra:** Not particularly, no. I think they're the, they're probably the main three.

Okay. And I think the mental health and mental wellbeing as a whole and anything that you could put into that I know. You know, for example, like wellness days Yeah. and duvet days that, that, that some clients are now offering the market are fantastic. Sure. small stuff like that is, is, is really, really helpful.

So it goes a way. Yeah, it does. It does. Because I think, and again, linking back, especially within the sector, you know, it's a stressful job and it can be a stressful job and, I think it's important to have that stuff in place to Yeah. To, to one, make sure that your employees are happy. and from an employee's perspective, it's good to know that you've got that buy-in and you can, support, your staff. Yeah. because it's gonna drive business and, and promote business for you. [00:39:00] Yeah. Like we said earlier about having. Happy employees, happy clients happy. Definitely. All, all plays into one.

**Michael Paul:** Yeah, definitely. Well, look, I think, I think this has given us a really great insight. You know, I'm a bit biased.

I work with you a lot, but, you know, you, you certainly do a hell of a job for us. And, you know, I, I know I've had feedback that you do a hell of job for other people as well, so, you know, in a, in a very ever-changing industry, it's important to have the right recruiter or recruitment firm working with you and, and getting you the best talent.

And, and yeah, you do a great job. So I appreciate you coming in and having a, a little chat with me today. And, I'll make sure I put the, your details, on the end of the video as well, so, you know, if people are looking for a new job or if it's client base, they want to reach out and ask you to get them some talents, then they can do so as well.

So I'll make sure it there. All right.