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with Keith Vaz

# one to one

## JONATHAN VANDERMOLLEN

CEO - Vandermolen Real Estate



Jonathan was born in Cricklewood in 1964, the only son of Pauline & David both of whom worked in shops. Jonathan left school at 16, his first job was at a Bank which he enjoyed until the Bank was robbed and he had a gun stuck in his face.

Being an only child, his mother told him to find a new career, so he joined an Estate Agency. He spent 7 years selling flats and houses in Central London but decided he wanted to be his own boss, so in 1991 started a business called Blenheim Bishop in Mayfair, specialising in the sale and acquisition of land, residential investments, new homes across London & the Southeast. At that time, they were the first independently owned agency in that field. Jonathan built the business to a team of 45 and in 2006 sold it to a public company. The Public Company went into administration in 2008 and the business was returned to Jonathan, he sold the lettings business and left the firm in 2013 to pursue other opportunities.

### 1) Which place, or city or country do you most feel at home in?

It must be London, I was born and brought up on a council estate in Cricklewood, North London where there was a diverse range of people from all backgrounds which sums the city up. There is so much history from the Royal palaces, Houses of parliament, the parks, theatre, restaurants, and the now new home of my beloved Tottenham Hotspurs. I really don't think there is a more diverse City with something for everyone!

### 2) What are your proudest achievements?

It's a combination of my children who are all hard-working adults who understand that nothing in life is free, and you have to work for what you want and be a decent human together with founding my own businesses and being able to control my own destiny. Vandermolen Real Estate is a relatively new bespoke agency just focusing on land and investment which I really enjoy.

### 3) What inspires you?

Successful people who have come from Humble backgrounds and worked hard for their success but then give back to charity or their community and not forgotten where they came from. Also, people who always put others first, they are a rare breed but I'm lucky enough to be married to one and know a number of others.

### 4) What has been biggest obstacle in your career?

I suppose it was dealing with the CEO of the public company I sold Blenheim Bishop to who didn't listen to me or the founders of the other businesses they purchased when the market started to crash in 2008 and then watching the value of what we had all built get destroyed.

### 5) Who has been the biggest influence

### on your career to date?

There have been a number, one of my first bosses Mark Pollack who showed me that with hard work you can achieve anything. Then some incredible people I worked with over the years such as Tony Pidgley, Jamie Ritbalt and probably my wife Melissa who has always supported me no matter what.

### 6) What is the best aspect about your current role?

After a few years out of the estate agency business I'm back doing what I love the most selling property and building a business. We have an amazingly diverse range of clients and I'm really enjoying where the business is going but most importantly, we only deal with people we like and trust. You also never know what is at the end of the next phone call!

### 7) And the worst?

Dealing with people who don't tell the truth and make promises they know they can't keep I'm too old for that nonsense. The first thing we tell all new clients is that we trust everyone implicitly as they can only screw us once!

### 8) What are your long term goals?

To watch my family, grow up, my daughter got married last year, which was the best day of my life, continue to travel. To build a business I can be proud of that is well respected with a first-class reputation. See Tottenham Hotspurs win a trophy (preferably the premiership) and reduce my golf handicap

### 9) If you were Prime Minister, what one aspect would you change?

The planning system. The reality is no politician is really interested in new homes as it simply doesn't win enough votes. I would create a planning system that was clearly defined in all aspects including the levels of affordable housing that local politicians or planning committee members couldn't interfere with.

### 10) If you were marooned on a desert island, which historical figure would you like to spend your time with and why.

Probably Margaret Thatcher as she changed the face of business during her tenure, and I think gave me and many others the belief you could build a business and succeed. I would also really love to know what goes on behind closed doors at 10 Downing Street and in the cabinet office.

## MAJOR

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