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CORWYN:

Good morning. Good morning, guys.

Welcome to another fabulous episode of [Exit Strategies Radio Show](#). Hey, I am your host, Corwyn J Melette at broker and owner of [Exit Realty Lowcountry Group](#) in beautiful North Charleston, South Carolina. Hey, if this is your first time, yes, if it is your first time listening to this show, guys, you are in for a treat because our mission is very simple. That is to empower our community through financial literacy and real estate education, guys, legacy building. I always want to give a shout out to those who listen to us faithfully, those who tune in, who listen in, who share us, who do all this stuff, man, you guys rock.

Always have to shout out Pastor Vanderbilt Evans Senior, his wonderful bride, Sandra Evans, love you guys. The McKellars that listen, the Lequeu family that listens, my mama out there in Monkeys Corner, y'all, y'all people out there in Hollywood, what you know no good. And my folks in Mullins, yes, in Mullins, my hometown, the Maltioneers, the Troy family, y'all, thank you for listening, for listening, for tuning in. So guys, I'm super excited about today's show. I'm very, very, very excited about this one because we're going to talk about the hidden cost of homeownership, property taxes, financial strategy, and smarter homeowner decisions.

So most homeowners focus on the price they pay for a house, but one of the biggest long-term expenses isn't the mortgage, it's the cost of keeping the property over time. From rising property taxes to overlooked financial inefficiencies, small gaps in awareness can quietly cost homeowners thousands of dollars. If you review your real housing costs today, would you discover savings or would you be surprised? So hey, today I have an amazing guest, Mr. Colton Pace, who is the co-founder and CEO, always say after CEO, the boss of OwnWell, a technology platform dedicated to helping homeowners reduce property tax burdens and better understand the full financial picture of owning real estate. After managing real estate assets for ultra-high net worth families, Colton saw that sophisticated financial optimization strategies were often unavailable to everyday homeowners.

So today, by a \$50 million Series B, OwnWell has helped customers save more than \$400 million in property taxes nationwide. So in this conversation, we'll explore how homeowners can better manage long-term costs, improve financial literacy, which is one of our staples, and make more strategic real estate decisions. Colton, welcome to the show.

COLTON:

Thank you. Amazing intro.

I'm excited to be here, excited to have you.

CORWYN:

Awesome, awesome. So Colton, I done poured it on thick, man. I think I did peanut butter today. So I need you to give him the jelly.

I need you to tell him and put this thing, make it stick together. What is it that you do, man? And let's talk about it.

COLTON:

Yeah. Okay. So from the beginning, worked for a billionaire.

The way billionaires manage their homes and the way 28 homes across the country, stadium, affordable housing, apartment complexes, industrial office, right? Massive real estate portfolio, right? And so how they manage their expenses and how my friends and family and people I knew did is world of difference. And so that's where OwnWell comes from. Today, I lead a team of over 100 employees now, basically helping people that own everything from a mobile home to 500 homes, to a franchise restaurant and everywhere in between. When you call the lawyer and say, I have a \$500,000 property, they don't get excited. And so we've built software and built a team that's purpose built for people who own lower value real estate.

And we can help people with \$100 million properties too. But there wasn't a solution for people who own a couple homes, or even one home, or a couple rental properties, or smaller real estate to reduce their tax bills, to even think about grouping insurance together, look at their utilities bills, really understand expenses, massive asset class in real estate, largest asset the majority of Americans ever own, largest expense they face every single month. Yet we're looking at our Robin Hood or Fidelity account, but we're sitting in a leveraged asset that we should pay attention to more importantly. And so started OwnWell to really help people understand, love the mission of this show. It's exactly aligned with our mission just to provide confidence and clarity and equity to homeowners and property owners across the country.

CORWYN:

So literally one of my clients have this thing about live well, be well. And I just thought about it probably the second, third time you ain't mentioned the name OwnWell. I love that and it ties in so well to existing in a better place. So let's dig into this. So obviously property taxes are a major long-term expense.

I mean, for lack of a better way to put it, my God, look, even when you don't pay for the mortgage, you still got to pay them doggone taxes. So how does your platform, man, I love that it's rooted in, hey, this group was left out of this. Y'all got this, y'all doing this. This group over here could benefit from that. So let's give them something to help them.

So long-term, what does that look like? Like that, the misconceptions about fixed housing costs is oftentimes, man, people just think, hey, my mortgage payment is going to stay the same for the entire duration. And we really know that's not the case.

COLTON:

Yeah. On property taxes, we like to think of ourselves and OwnWell as a holistic management platform for the property tax bill. We're not going to save everybody money.

We're going to do our best to do it. But the best thing about our business is that we operate on a contingency fee. And so if you hit OwnWell.com right now, enter your address, sign up, authorize us to talk to tax assessor on your behalf. If we don't save you money, we're never going to charge you anything.

And so we charge 25 to 35 percent of what we save you. And so only after we've saved you money. And so you can log in. We'll tell you when your tax bill is coming up. We'll tell you if you got a new assessment.

We'll review that new assessment, whether or not it's fair. We'll make sure you get any early payment discounts. There's counties across the country where you can pay early and get 3 percent discount, which is meaningful. One thing people don't know about is like you got to vote on these tax rates. If you live in the community, no one ever votes for these tax rates.

And if you don't vote, they're going to. And so over time, they're going to go up. And yes, we want to fund our schools and we're excited about education, but we want people to be responsible about the budgets they're setting for communities as well. We'll give you notifications along the way, help you forecast your next bill and all that. But our bread and butters is we go to bat with the county assessors and reduce that assessment.

So in turn, reducing your tax bill. And so most of our businesses, we review your tax assessment, let you know what's happening. We go out and reduce it with the tax assessor on your behalf and come back and say, here's how much money we saved.

CORWYN:

Man, look here, man. Look here.

You look here. I feel like there's a cartoon. So you blow the top and then blow your head, top of your head off and come back and then blow it again and go off again. I literally feel like that in this conversation because one of the things that we're always talking about in affordability and I want you to touch on this Colton is property tax. That's a part of the overall cost of ownership.

And most times nowadays, I mean, every lender, I say every lender, but it's very rare. I see a loan that is not escrow. Like you got to have a lot of money into it. Otherwise escrow, which

means that taxes is a direct reflection of that total housing payment. So how do things like what you're talking about impact affordability? How are you seeing an impact affordability for people?

COLTON:

Exactly right.

And when stuff is escrowed, it's much more opaque, like you don't see it. You're just paying that monthly bill. And then at the end of the year, you either have a shortage or a surplus, hopefully a surplus. But either way, I think you're mad. And so if your escrow company or your mortgage company didn't project your property tax bill correctly, you're going to be either overpaying or underpaying.

And then there's that huge true up. And so thinking about affordability, that's where our mission started. Corporations and very high net worth individuals do this every year. They appeal, they protest, they even litigate their property tax bills. And then everybody else doesn't.

And so over time, this is a complex aspect of the business. But over time, that school district still needs that budget. And so rather than being short of that budget, after the assessments are reduced for the skyscraper downtown, they change the tax rate from 0.5% to 0.51%.

And so over time, the tax burden is actually shifting onto those people who are not appealing. We are legitimately trying to level that playing field. How do we make sure everybody who should be appealing, everybody has an argument for being overassessed and doesn't have adequate exemptions. We got to identify all those things, raise awareness, raise education, and make sure everybody's on a fair footing and equitable tax process because that's property taxes have to be fair. It's in almost all tax codes across different states.

And so from affordability, I think most people are okay paying a fair tax bill. If it's not fair and you see it going up year after year and corporations and other individuals that are going down year after year, then people start to be mad. And so really trying to help level that out and make it as affordable as possible while still funding education and our schools and communities that we live in.

CORWYN:

So Colton, let's shift this up a little bit. And this is a very broad question.

Why is it that millions of homeowners are out here in theory overpaying? Even the people, and there's a lot of people, and it's interesting you talk, say what you just said a moment ago, but why are we here? Why do people not understand like, okay, I can do this and then apply it? So property valuations and assessments, we understand, or I say we understand, but if you could kind of touch on millage rates and stuff and how those things and assessment rates impact the final, if you will, tax bill, but how are we missing a boat on this is where I'm going on property valuations and assessments.

COLTON:

Property taxes are different state by state. So every state sets different rules. I know enough about South Carolina, but like I can speak to Texas all day. And anyways, so basically what happens everywhere in the country is property tax is an ad valorem tax, meaning it is a percentage, you pay a percentage of the value of that asset every single year or whatever is legislatively known.

I think in South Carolina, it's at least every five years, your property has to be reassessed to fair market value. And so their tax assessor is running a big program. It's a multiple linear regression, and they're spitting out a number just like Zillow does. And so they spit out a Zestimate. And if you look below the Zestimate, there's another number that is the confidence interval, and it's a massive range.

And so like, okay, it's a million dollar home. No, it's actually worth 700,000 to 1.4. That is a massive range. And they're going to spit that number out.

And then that has to be right. And so in speaking to thousands of real estate experts, it's impossible to nail fair market value until there's an actual transaction and arm's length. That is what we're missing. That number not only has to be fair, but it has to be defensible. And so what we do day in and day out at OwnWell is I argue the lowest possible value of your home if I were to go and transact.

If there's a chance that this property is going to sell for \$700,000, I shouldn't be taxed as if it's worth 1.3. And so everybody thinks about what's the worst outlook I could have on this property? Let's say like, are there lights from a commercial building visible from my backyard? Is there a train that goes by? Is there recent water damage? Have I recently replaced my HVAC? Is my roof really old? These are things that assessor's office does not know. And they are things that are important because if someone came and toured the house to buy it or toured the property to buy it, they would realize these things and say like, I'm not going to pay as much for it. And the assessor doesn't know that.

As we go into an appeal, you got to think about that. And then that value is multiplied by the millage rate or the tax rate or whatever it's called in that geography. That's why that tax assessment is super important. And that's what appeals are. That's what petitions are, grievances, lots of different names in different geographies, all the same thing.

It's basically saying, I don't agree with this number. I'm going to push back. And that's what OwnWell does day in and day out. And we try and reduce those assessments so we can in turn reduce the tax bill.

CORWYN:

Number one reason, I guess, and I say number one, a reason.

You guys, this is your arena. This is your space. So Colton, why is it primarily that you are told or otherwise believe that people are not doing this? Like why? Why?

COLTON:

There's even tools out there and we've put a tool out there to generate the packet. It's the same we hate going to the DMV. The process, you're going down to the local county office and you're arguing with someone.

That's where I think OwnWell's actually real value is. Not only is it, we're going to generate all the evidence and we're going to show up for you and we're going to go to hearings and we're going to call them and we're going to push it along. But the actual, it's almost like an object in motion. Most homeowners are an object at rest. You have to get in motion.

You get your assessment and then you often have like 30 to 60 days to appeal. You have to move quick. You have to build evidence. You have to show up at the assessor's office at the right time and you have to push back with the right arguments. Many customers are like, I'm just not going to do it.

It's a bill from the government. I'm just going to pay it. We are trained to pay bills from the government. And then two, educational awareness. There's no pamphlet that comes with when you purchase property, especially first time purchase.

No one, what are we calling our dad to ask us if we should do this? There is no manual homeownership and that's why we go beyond property taxes too, because it's just everything is archaic from a real estate perspective. And you got to listen to great shows like this to learn and know what you're talking about.

CORWYN:

So look, I'm going to go ahead. I got my appetite to plunge, man. And I'm going to tell you why.

Because everything that you're saying, look, for our listeners, guys, look, transparent moment. I know that you can do this because you can appeal a tax bill, car taxes, all that stuff. Oftentimes people, if they got high miles on a vehicle, they automatically know to appeal that, right? But we don't think about it. We don't think to argue about the taxation or anything per se. And like you said, Colton, I am, look here, that's me, man.

Look here. I ain't got time for that. I got to move on to something else. You guys have a niche in this. That's a no brainer.

So look here, for our listeners, guys, I'm jumping in. I need y'all to go and jump in with me. So Colton, let's shift again because you set the stage originally with, hey, the ultra wealthy are doing this. And sometimes those who don't feel they are or not in that class, they don't think, if you will, to do it. I don't think they can do it.

They think that's a tool or resource just for the uber ultra wealthy. So let's delve into that. Let's do that. So what do they do otherwise proactive in this realm in order to mitigate or lower expenses such as taxation and, or other costs of ownership of real property?

AD:

One thing Colton has emphasized throughout today's conversation is that wealth isn't just about what you earn. It's about what you keep.

And when you start protecting expenses like property taxes, insurance, and housing costs, you create more opportunities to put your money to work. That's exactly why we created [MelliFund Capital](#). You found a perfect property. You got the vision. Now you need the capital. At [MelliFund Capital](#), we specialize in funding real estate deals for investors who want to build, flip, or hold, and don't have the time to chase after banks. Whether it's new construction, a fix and flip, or long-term rental, we offer simple terms, fast approvals, and access to private capital. We even work with manufactured housing projects because we know what it takes to build value from the ground up. Simple. You bring the deal. We bring the money. Visit mellifundcapital.com or call **843-619-7038** to get pre-qualified today. [MelliFund Capital](#), we fund what you build.

COLTON:

[OwnWell](#), holistically, we want to hit all expenses associated with the home.

So I can hit mortgage, property taxes, insurance, utilities, and maintenance. Those are the five categories, I think. Mortgage, right? Should you take out a home equity line of credit because you've got equity built up? Should you refi because you have an 8% rate and rates are at 6.5? Just thinking about that. If people aren't on top of that, you're leaving money on the table by not refiing.

Insurance, we were recalculating and re-quoting on a quarterly basis. If you think about big storm comes through, insurance risk changes. Different players will come into different markets and say, I want risk in Charleston or I don't want risk in Charleston. They're going to change their rates. Thinking about different risk associated with the business of insurance, should you switch insurance every year? Maybe.

For car and auto, people do often, but for home, people don't change it as often because it's rolled into that escrow. Escrow is like a hidden treasure trove of cost-saving. Utilities, depending on the market, you can think about solar. Rates are a little high for solar right now, but think about swapping different utility providers. Here in Texas, if you're not in a major city, you can switch your utility provider.

Looking at what's the best thing to do there. Then, of course, maintenance. We've built a little tool that basically helps you estimate what it should actually cost. The guy comes to fix your HVAC and he says, it's going to be \$3,000. We don't know.

What's the actual answer here? Without going and getting four quotes, it's going to take a whole day and you're going to have to miss work. You need a better understanding of what the actual

cost of maintenance is. How much should a new roof be? How much should it be to update your landscaping? We have a tool, really like an AI tool that's helping you look at costs and history associated with that type of job in your zip code and how much it could cost and just educating. Educating and raising awareness to think more about these expenses because they're often the largest expense we face every single month is associated with our housing.

CORWYN:

I think every time I get it back down and I'll be able to button it up or whatever, you keep blowing my mind, man.

Seriously. You made mention and you framed it this way a little earlier about treating your real estate as a managed asset. And to be very blunt, I know I don't, but my imagination says that most of our listeners probably don't either. We tend to, if we got money market accounts, if we got investments, 401ks, all that stuff, those are things that we look at. And sometimes we make adjustments or make shifts depending upon whatever we're perceiving or believing about the economy of the market, but we don't treat our home that way.

So expand on that for us about that approach.

COLTON:

The cool thing about looking at your Coinbase or Fidelity or Robinhood or whatever platform is like it's changing daily. And so you could refresh your Zillow estimate or your property value, but it's not going to change that much. And so we operate and we give out these, what we call quarterly property reports. Think about your home and the expenses associated with your home on a quarterly, maybe monthly, if you're really obsessing over it, but on a quarterly basis.

Revisit, have rates change. Rates don't change quickly. And so you're building equity in your home every single time you make a payment. And then rates are either going to drop in the next couple of years or not. And people are going to be in a situation where they can save some money and refire, push further out or not.

And so just revisiting on a less often cadence, looking at those expenses. But then when things pop up, when you get your renewal notice for your insurance, that's the biggest time for our insurance, our insurance department. And as we save people money on insurance, it's when renewal comes. You get the new notice from XYZ insurance company. It went up 20%.

Take action. Don't just let it roll into the next year. Think about it when it comes up or when there's big opportunities, like on the maintenance side, you don't think about replacing your roof until about one time every 10, 15 years, or there's a big hailstorm and you have to do something. It's really those specific moments where you have to be really smart and make the right decision. And so we're trying to build, what we like to say, smart, personalized recommendations and become that trusted financial advisor.

So should you have any questions around a big financial decision, because everything around your home is so big and it's often a multi-year commitment, then that's where we want to exist and help people in making those decisions.

CORWYN:

Man, look, that is huge. So you guys also, in shifting a little bit further, long-term property cost planning and financial resilience. So looking down the road, you guys also help people forecast this. And let me ask you, I guess, frame it this way as well.

Is this something that you only do after the fact or before? Meaning, let's say there's a consumer that's looking to purchase a home. Is that something that you guys can forecast prior to purchase or only after they purchase the home?

COLTON:

For large clients and large investors, they ask us before they purchase or underwrite a new all the time. They say like, what are the property taxes going to be on this? Because the minute you have a transaction, usually the assessor changes the assessment. And so that assessment, if you're using past taxes as your model going forward for whether or not I should buy this, it's not going to be right. And so yes, you can enter an address on lonewolf.

com or we can help you navigate to the right place to forecast what it's going to be. And not to rag on Zillow, but none of the Zillow, Redfin, Realtor.com, none of their tax rates, they're just pulling straight from the county and it doesn't actually make sense. So you're just going to see historical tax rates. You're not going to see what it actually could be when that veteran exemption falls off.

If a veteran currently owns that property, they have a huge discount. Thank you for their service. They should get that discount, but it's going to fall off the minute you buy it. And you're going to get a way bigger tax bill and people just, you don't see that and no one knows that until it happens. And so things like that, we get asked by investors all the time.

It's like, what's going to happen when I buy this?

CORWYN:

So Colton, we're very big on legacy here on the show. I want to ask you this question. Many people see homeownership as the milestone. So as you may mention earlier, and we say this very often, it's usually the largest single transaction a person will ever do in their lifetime. It's a milestone.

So how does understanding and actively managing long-term costs like property taxes and those other financial, if you will, inefficiencies change the way that families can build not only housing stability, but also create wealth that can benefit future generations? So we're very big on that legacy piece. How does this factor in?

COLTON:

Yes, I totally agree with you. I think homeownership is getting less and less accessible as property values rise and interest rates are still high. Managing your property taxes and all the other expenses associated with your home, well, if you're saving that money, right, that can contribute to paying off the property more quickly. And then in an unfortunate scenario, it can keep you in the home longer.

And so we have stories about senior citizens in Florida or Georgia, and they're getting priced out of their home. Not only is it their home that they've retired in and they're set on fixed income and their tax bill's going up and they can't afford that, but it's likely their children's home. And leaving that legacy of this asset and passing that on from all their hard work throughout their career to their children, that is slowly they're getting priced out of. And so at OwnWell, we love the impact that we make and we love the stories we've heard and things shared. Whether we're paying for our clients' kids' soccer league or helping them stay in their home longer, we love those stories.

I want them to be able to maintain that financial freedom and wealth creation that is homeownership. And so reducing those bills that grow every single year by five or 6% makes a difference over time. And so we continue to do our work to try and keep people in their homes longer and maintain that legacy and love that that is a focus of the show.

CORWYN:

Awesome. Awesome.

So Colton, perfect place, man. We're quickly getting to the end of today's show. How can people get in contact with you? What do they need to do?

COLTON:

I mean, if you're interested in the business, check us out, OwnWell.com. You can see all our different services there.

If you want to connect with me personally, LinkedIn's my social media of choice. So feel free to look me up, Colton Pace. I'm on LinkedIn. I think my thing is whack, Colton Pace. Would be happy to help any and all who are listening and hope that they can maintain that path to financial freedom.

CORWYN:

Awesome, man. Awesome. Look here, I want to ask this question before we get into our wrap up for today. On average, savings that you guys are seeing for people, what does that tend to look like?

COLTON:

Totally depends by customer, right? And so I usually say 6% to 7% of your tax bill. Depending on where you live, that's more or less.

On average, I think we're roughly around \$750 per year per customer.

CORWYN:

Man, that's huge. Man, for our listeners, guys, look, my mind is, look here, as sometimes me and my wife joke, my flabber has been gassed, okay? Like repeatedly today. So Colton, man, thank you so much. Thank you so much for our listeners, guys.

Let me give you these takeaways because y'all got to get this, man. Y'all got to do this. Review your property tax assessments regularly. Don't assume that they're accurate. As Colton made mention of, we just pay it because the government sent it, right? Understand the full cost of owning a home, not just what the mortgage payment is, but what those other costs that sometimes are a part of it.

And then also adopt proactive financial habits that treat your home as a long-term asset. It's an investment, guys. It really, really truly is. And Colton, I want to thank you for opening or reminding me of that because you literally have done that for me today to remind me to look at my own property as that versus just what we've done. So Colton, again, thank you so much for being on the show with us today.

COLTON:

Absolutely. It's been my pleasure.

CORWYN:

So in closing, guys, in real estate, true wealth isn't created only by owning a property. It is strengthened by how wisely you manage the costs that come with it. So for our listeners, guys, look, y'all know what it is.

Y'all know how I feel. You know what I say. You know, I always put the two of those things together and I give it to you this way, which is to tell you that I love you. I love you. I love you.

And we're going to see you guys out there in those streets.