

CORWYN:

Money and creation building wealth is a much bigger animal, a much bigger strategy. Legacy isn't created by owning more doors, because we're going to talk about real estate today. It's built through the decisions, systems, and relationships that keep wealth growing long after, quote-unquote, the deal is closed.

Good morning, good morning, great morning. Welcome to another fabulous episode of Exit Strategies Radio Show.

Hey, I am your host, Corwyn J. Melette, broker and owner of Exit Realty Low Country Group in beautiful North Charleston, South Carolina. Hey, if this is your first time listening to this show, you serve a man for a treat. Our mission here is very simple. That is to empower our community through financial literacy and real estate education, guys, with legacy building.

That is what we do. Always got to give a quick shout out to those who I love faithfully. Y'all know how I feel, and y'all know I always say this, elder, pastor, Vanderbilt Elvin Sr. Hey, look, got to give him a shout out. That guy will snatch me up if I don't, and it's always a trip, because he will snatch me hard.

My mama out there in Mull's Corner, y'all out there in Hollywood with no good, my folks listening in the PD, Mary Mullins, y'all know I love y'all. Thank y'all so much for tuning in. Look here, today, legacy through leadership, system strategy, and mindset for generational wealth. Now, look here, y'all know we like to talk about money around here, because we want y'all to have some of it. That's why we talk about it.

But look here, money and creation building wealth is a much bigger animal, a much bigger strategy. Legacy isn't created by owning more doors, because we're going to talk about real estate today. It's built through the decisions, systems, and relationships that keep wealth growing long after, quote, unquote, the deal is closed. With nearly 20 years of experience, our guest today has facilitated over 100 million. Look here, that's a 10th of a bill right there.

You know what I mean? That's what we're talking about today. We're talking about money and creation of wealth, over \$100 million in real estate transactions. So, Dan Rivers reveals how disciplined, disciplined investing guys, value-driven partnerships, and purposeful mindsets help shift the wealth and the creation of wealth for families that truly and truly last. Now, Dan is an awesome guy. Y'all going to love him.

I love him already. Y'all going to love him. He is the opportunity architect. I love when he said that. It blew my mind.

Over at Synergy Stays, where he builds systems that create predictable income and long-term asset performance, guys, has a deep network of contract lenders and industry partners, and collaborate with them, and have a relationship, a relationship that's built on trust and mutual benefit. He's known for turning challenging situations into stepping stones. Look here, we're

going to step on them things that ain't got nothing, ain't got nothing. No, we're going to walk all over them. Use a resilience and mindset to help shape, quote unquote, his own legacy.

He's passionate about empowering everyday people. So, guys, I want y'all to tune in on this and to help people build wealth intentionally and live life, if you will, on their own terms. So, Dan, I can go on forever because you is my kind of guy. Welcome to the show.

DAN:

I just want to say I appreciate you, and thank you.

That was a great introduction. That was amazing. Honestly, that is my drive. I was just mentioning to you, I have a six-month-old boy at home, a four-year-old girl, and the biggest focus in life is not just building wealth, as you said, but building a strong mindset, building confidence, building self-worth, being able to not have imposter syndrome as you go through these bigger phases in life. Because I know I did.

I had imposter syndrome bad, and it took me years to get over. So, I want to build that confidence up in these kids and give them that mindset to be as successful as possible. That's what excites me.

CORWYN:

So, Dan, let's jump right in. High level. What is it that you do? I gave you an introduction, so tell the folks what it is you do. All right.

DAN:

I'll give the quick version of this, but as you said, I've been over 20 years in the business. Started off managing high-rise condominiums down in Tampa, HOAs. I did that up in Boston until about 2017.

So, my real estate knowledge and backing came from managing very valuable assets started before 2008. So, I was managing these big assets during that crash and then right through it until 2017. I'm understanding how to do financial statements and budgets and variance reports and contracts and working with vendors and just all things real estate. In 2018, my beautiful now wife was my girlfriend at the time. She said, I need to move out of Boston.

I'm done with this cold weather. We moved on down to Charleston, South Carolina. Absolutely love living here. And she gave me the opportunity to go for, I said, I want to sell real estate now. I managed it long enough.

I'm ready to sell it. So, I got my license in 2018. Started going to coffee shops, met with a lot of investors, became an investor in late 2018 and built up a portfolio now that I have. I've invested in syndications. And quite honestly, I did a lot of things.

I did a lot of, I had a roofing company, a little bit of coaching. I did real estate sales. I flip, I wholesale. I did everything. And then I realized quickly, I do a lot of things okay or good and I don't do enough things great.

So, that's the first learning lesson I had is focus on one to two things that you could be absolutely great on. And that's what I do now. I have a real estate sales team. We're about to do 45 deals this year. And Synergy Stays is my other avenue where I'm the opportunity architect.

Business development is boring. And I want to, we hope drive revenue for short-term rentals in short. So, that's what I focus on now, those two lanes.

CORWYN:

So, short-term rentals, a lot of people explore this particular genre, if you will, as far as building a portfolio or otherwise. So, why STR? Let's start with that.

A simple question, but in your mind, why STR? Let's take a short break.

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DAN:

I think almost any investment avenue you want to go in, you could be successful in, my opinion. You just have to go all in on that. **It's too easy to have the squirrel syndrome, like squirrel.** You're always trying to do something else as an entrepreneur, investor, whatever you want to call it, and just focusing on one area.

And why short-term rentals for me? I mean, I do own long-term rentals and short-term rentals and a few other avenues. But the reason why I focus in that when it comes to revenue management is because I have a partner that I work with. His name's Mike, who's been in short-term rentals since 2015. And he is, if not the best, one of the top people when it comes to driving revenue. He understands the ins and outs of short-term rentals.

So when I'm able to be a part of a company that I know not just be good, can be absolutely great and change the industry, it excites me more than anything in the world. So that's why short-term rentals. And we can go into house hacking with a short-term play for early on

investors or owning short-term rentals is nice for tax strategies as well as just having a house that's always show ready, always kept up in great maintenance condition, because I know all your long-term rental landlords out there. We know how it is when a tenant's been there three years, you go into that house and you got to throw \$20,000 in CapEx on that house pretty quickly. So there's a lot of benefits to short-term rentals.

But the thing that excites me the most is I know that we are great at driving revenue and it just excites me.

CORWYN:

So you're an expert in this field. All right. Let's get that on the table for our listeners, guys. Look, don't question him because he know what he's talking about.

He has the experience. All right. So establish, right? Baseline for you, for Synergy States, yourself, your partner, Mike, what does this look like? Like when you are eyeing a property, what's one of the first things or the things that are most important to you guys as you analyze a property for a potential STR or long-term?

DAN:

Yeah. Are you talking about purchasing it or a potential client for us to call or service? Let's cover both. Yeah.

Let's start with purchasing. Let's start with purchasing. This is so important because we see it all the time and I know I've done it myself where if you're an investor, investor-minded, you want to get a deal on your house. At the end of the day, you want to feel like you won and that's all that matters, which is fine when you're flipping a house maybe or other avenues. But when you're buying a short-term rental, so many times people buy a house that they want and then try to force it to become a short-term rental without really understanding what the possible revenue projections are for that.

And not to mention, year one of a short-term rental is going to be drastically different than year two and so on because you have to build up your ratings, your reviews, you have to build up your search rankings. So when it comes to buying a short-term rental, the advice I give to people is treat it like you would treat when you're buying your home, you would have a home inspection. One thing that we do or do it however you want, you can do it on your own through these pricing tech software, is do a detailed analysis of the market in the home itself and really understand what you're buying and what its potential is, what your competition is, what amenities they have. Can you even mirror that? You go buy a house in maybe the mountains because you're like, hey, I want to go buy a house out near Asheville. Wonderful, that's awesome.

Are you walking distance to a downtown? Do you have mountain views? Do you have a really steep slope driveway? There's a lot of factors that are involved that may affect the actual revenue you're able to produce for that. It's not everything else is exactly alike just because it

has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and 2,000 square feet with a hot tub. So really understanding what you're buying, where you're buying, and do your due diligence before you purchase it so you don't have those uh-oh moments and you're trying to force a house to become a short-term rental. We see that time and time again and that's where people usually lose their money when it comes to purchasing a home.

CORWYN:

Have the right intention.

So buying a home that you like because you might want to retire to it 30 years from now or whatever time period. It may not make a good STO. That's what I just heard. So what about the other side? As you're advising, as you're working with potential clients and assisting them, how do you have them approach it?

DAN:

Just like everything, and I know you know this in the industry you've been in, you're an expert too, been in this forever. It's like having strong teams by your side, whether real estate, sales time, you got the attorney, you got your insurance agents, you got your lenders, you got to have good teams.

That's how I visualize it when it comes to working with an investor or a property manager. We're part of your team to help maximize the revenue for your property. So what we're looking for is we take all the pricing off of your plate. We go through, we take care of booking up your calendar, we take care of driving that revenue through a lot of different levers, we take care of helping optimize your listing, which is key, or give you tips on things that you can do to make your listing better. Those are all the things that we're going to do to maximize your revenue and a lot more.

We could talk about that for a while. But what I'm looking for is someone who has good ratings, 4.75 and above on Airbnb. Someone who cares about the guest experience because we don't message the guest, we don't create the experience, we solely drive the revenue. So when we partner with someone who cares about that experience side of it and then we can just handle the revenue, they're our absolutely best client to work with because we just crush it.

We can hit the top of their revenue projections if we both work together as a team and stay in our lanes.

CORWYN:

Yeah, that's smart. So something you touched on, Dan, and we talk about this on occasion on the show about not making a decision emotionally. So you guys really, you know, delve into, learn, know your analytics. So what does that process look like for you? You may mention of, okay, look, we handle this.

We leave this to you, but we handle all of this. So what does that process look like from, start wherever you want to start and give however much you want to give. But what does that process look like for you, for Synergy Stays in working with a client?

DAN:

Yeah. So the easiest part about it, onboarding is pretty simple. They just, so we'll kind of skip past that, but basically we have a link, they fill out all the information, we get access to their PMS or Airbnb, VRBO, whatever OTAs they're on.

We get access through the backend and then we take over from there and it's nice and easy, nice and smooth. So the onboarding part is pretty simple. So now let's dive deep into the expectations and what happens from there. First things first is we check, we check their search rankings because no matter how beautiful your home is and how well priced it is, if you're on page 10 and 12 and I mean, we've had people that are on page 18, you're not getting booked or you may get booked, but you're going to be the last ones that get booked and your pricing is going to be dropping because of that. So we help optimize that listing right away.

That's first and foremost, because you know what, you're laughing here. So do you have an experience?

CORWYN:

No, but look here, nobody's going to page 18, man. They're not, they're not going to page 18.

DAN:

That's first and foremost. We actually had a client that I think he moved up like 100 spots from page 16 to page 2 in the first couple of weeks and that's what we focused on because we needed to get them searchable.

Some people are better, some people are searchable. We don't have to spend as much time on that, but that's done through optimizing your listing. I know you say this all the time, Corwyn, I can guarantee you do to your listing clients, get professional photos when not doing cell phone pics. It's the same thing with short-term rentals. The amount of cell phone pics out there is, listen, the iPhone has a nice picture.

It can take nice pictures, but not for a listing, not for a listing. But pictures, the title, believe it or not, you don't title it properly. You could title it the Magnolia house. No one knows what that is. You may want to title it house with pool table and jacuzzi or four bedroom pool table and jacuzzi.

It sounds kind of lame, but you're getting right to the point of why someone's going to book that house. To labeling your pictures, to making sure you have at least roughly 20, 25 pictures, getting some action shots if you want. It's not the MLS. You can have action shots in there, people enjoying themselves. To just making sure you check off as many amenities as you can.

I'm not talking about you have to have a pool. I'm talking about maybe it's kid-friendly, have a crib, pack and play, toys. As many checks as you could make, you're going to help your search rankings when it comes to someone looking for your short-term rental. First and foremost, that is what we do. After that, we do daily, weekly, and monthly cashflow rhythms where we're constantly tweaking, changing, setting up pricing discounts, setting up a lot of different things through Airbnb or through PriceWatch, what we use.

We utilize a lot of AB testing to figure out what's working for your property, what's not to drive as much occupancy first, and then ultimately lift your revenue. In short, not to go too deep into it, that's what we do to get it going. Yeah.

CORWYN:

Tom Bilyeu So, Dan, look, you've done this. We've probably seen some stuff, man, that when you think back on, it probably makes you just bust out and laugh like you got to be kidding me.

Is Ashton around here trying to prank me or something, right? If you can share, give us an example of when it went wrong. I'm going to have you go on the other side. You did give us, quote, unquote, a win in getting a client up in their ranking and their searchability, but give me one where it just went wrong. You saw somebody either for you or you saw somebody, whatever they did just went wrong. Obviously, that would have been before they called you.

You know what I'm saying? Give us something because people really should be engaging with you guys and getting assistance to help get a return on their investments. Daniel Levy That's a good question.

DAN:

I'll give you kind of a general one because you had mentioned this earlier and I think it's important it happens all the time in short term rentals is the emotional connection. Then probably one of the biggest hurdles we've had either with the client that we took on or someone that we're in the middle of taking on that we have to educate is when they come to us and they say, my house is worth no less than \$150 a night. I want to say to them, your house is worth what your market's telling your house is worth.

You don't get to tell me what your house is worth. You can, but then when you don't go booked, you can't come back and blame us if you're telling me we're not going below this when I can give you statistical data on how your competitors are pricing in order to make sure that you maximize that revenue. Because people don't always think about it that every night that goes unbooked, you're actually getting zero for that. I know you want 150 a night for your house, but you're really getting zero a night for all those homes unbooked. If I can get you five days at 125, it doesn't hit your 150 threshold, but I just got you a five-day booking that you wouldn't hit if you had your number too high, your nightly rate too high.

Would you take that? I would take it all day long. I want to get that revenue, especially during the slower seasons. Obviously, the busier seasons, we can push that daily rate, but during the

slower seasons, you can't as much. One of the biggest things we see constantly is people get emotionally attached. They feel instead of looking at data, and that's how they make decisions.

We have to really inform them and show them the data that says, your house is beautiful. Absolutely love it. It's gorgeous. I agree with you. It's still not worth that right now because here's what your market's telling you.

Do you want to go unbooked or would you like some bookings and get your house booked? That's probably the number one thing I see on a consistent basis, especially for someone who buys a second home as a short-term rental or maybe has one or two. They designed it themselves. They take a lot of pride in it, which I absolutely love, but you just got to know when to step away. Is it about the numbers or it is about the emotional connection? Because if you can separate that, you're going to be a lot more successful in your investment.

CORWYN:

Okay. Give us your victory lap. Whenever this went down, you was like, we got this right here. Give us your victory lap.

DAN:

I'll probably, we obviously have quite a few, but one of my most favorite victory laps is this one. I love how my team, and this is my team, and I'm going to give a shout out to my team, revenue managers, partners.

I have a whole team here. The only reason why we're successful is because it's all of us working in our lanes as best we can. That's why we do what we do. My team, we took on a client last November 25th, so a year ago. This is a mountain house, beautiful mountain house, and it had zero bookings in December and January.

Within five days, we had all of December booked. We had a 50-day booking, so all of December and 20 days in January. December is supposed to be their eighth busy, I say so, it's middle of the pack, a little less than middle of the pack for revenue. It was the most revenue they made in a month in the 16 months that they owned it in the first month that we took them over. Now, that doesn't always happen, but that just felt good.

I hear these things all the time. I had another person with a mountain house up there. I literally ran into him two weeks after we took over, and he was here. He's actually on our website, one of the testimonials, and that's a legit testimonial, because he started telling me, I was like, wait a second, I got to film this. He's like, dude, you just took over my ...

I'd never even pay my mortgage these winter months. You literally just took it over, and I've made more money than I've made in the past six months. Usually, I barely, I don't even break even. It just felt so good to hear that. Listen, it's not all roses.

There are issues. Obviously, it's always A-B testing. Nothing's perfect, but when you hear these wins from the people you're working with, it gets you excited. It gets you knowing what you're doing is something good.

CORWYN:

Question for you here, and I'm going to shift this a little bit, because you guys, you advise on everything, the entire power picture.

Sometimes people, matter of fact, one of the things that's interesting is I'll get out to me, because on occasion, I do stay at short-term rentals. One of the things that's very interesting to me is when you look at a house and it's extremely dated, no improvements, none of that stuff. Sometimes people feel they have the market corner, so to speak, got limited options, limited inventory, but the reality is that you got options. You're going to stay there. If you don't have other short-term rentals to stay at, you're going to stay in a hotel.

How do you guys advise people, or what is your advice in that arena as far as updates, houses that built in the 60s and 70s, and you go with them, they still feel like and look like they were built in the 60s and 70s?

DAN:

I think one of the biggest things to do, and I know we do this on the real estate side too, is you just go to them and show them competitors or the ability of what they can do to make their house better and provide better. I want to start here, though. I never want anybody to feel like they're in a financial hardship. You need to go spend 50 grand or your house isn't going to make anything or whatever the case is. Obviously, you want to be honest with them and tell them what the potential value is for the house, but they also have to be able to afford that and not put themselves in too much of a financial bind.

I would just go and pull data and say, hey, listen, right now you're operating, let's say the revenue you're bringing in is in the 50th percentile. You do these updates to your house and it's not like a house you're trying to sell. You don't necessarily have to go crazy on updating. Maybe you add a few amenities, a little bit of paint and even paint the cabinet, whatever it is. You do these \$5,000 to \$10,000 worth of renovations.

You have the potential to jump up to the 75th percentile of your market, which is an additional \$15,000, \$20,000 a year, whatever that number is. Then show them those numbers and say, it's up to you at the end of the day, but for this little bit of an investment, because everybody's looking at their ROI. If I put in 10 grand and you tell me I can make 15, I do that all day long. If I had to put in 100 grand, you tell me I can make 15, still may do it, 15% on 100 grand, but it's not as enticing or appealing at that point. I just look at it in that way and what would I do? I would say, hey, listen, here's what I would do.

I'd start off with these updates here, shouldn't cost you too much, and here's what we should start to see. If we do, we can always do maybe tier it and do the other updates at a future time.

Again, it would just all sit down and talk about the potential return on their investment, what that investment looks like and what the potential revenue is from that investment.

CORWYN:

So let's stretch that just one more, a little bit further here, Dan, because again, quick returns, right? But if someone is doing this, let's say they've gotten themselves into accumulating or building a portfolio, short-term rentals are part of that portfolio, and this is generation, they're looking for this to be there to help them through retirement and leave for their children to continue on. How do you advise differently in that setting? I'm assuming that in that assessment, initial intake, if you will, this conversation usually comes up, what's your long-term, what's your long-term play? How do you advise them to make sure they're having the right impact for any improvements or anything they do with the property today?

DAN:

Yeah, I'd say it would be somewhat similar, but obviously you got to look at the big picture.

I kind of look at everything in the big picture. They say, my buddy, good friend of mine, he owns, I don't know, 3,000 units, something like that. And we were chatting the other day, he was talking to a billionaire with a B, and he's like, how do you think differently? He's like, billionaires think the next 50 to 100 years, whereas we think maybe, hey, the next two, three years, how are we going to hold it? So an answer to your question is, I try to think of everything as much as possible. It's like, hey, at least the next 10 to 20 years. If you sell it in between that, that's up to you if you want to do that, but why are you going to buy something unless you're a flipper? Why are you buying something that you're planning on moving in the next two to three years? You don't know market cycles.

You don't know exactly where it's going to land, what the value of that house is going to be. It's going to be kind of hard for predictions on that point. You're buying these investment properties most likely for your legacy wealth to hold on to for the next 10, 20, 30, 40 years. So I would think in that aspect of it, and I would almost look at these properties. I'll go back to my days of managing high-rise condominiums on the beach and all that stuff.

You have a reserve study and you kind of have a game plan. It's like, hey, in the next five years, here's the things I want to get done. In the next 10 years, we know we're going to have to do a roof and maybe add these other items in there and kind of look at the next 20 years, every three to five years, what's the money they're going to have to put in all those times and start making sure you put the money in where the revenue is going to spit out first and then you could start tackling the other things because your revenue is going to pick up at that timeframe. So that's how I probably look at it. Someone wanted me to go more of a detailed analysis for their legacy is, hey, we want this thing not only being a great asset for you now, we want in 20 years for it to continue to be that great asset.

CORWYN:

So Dan, we're getting close to the end of the show. So I want to make sure we take an opportunity now to get your contact information out here on there for our listeners. How can people reach out to you, get connected to you, Synergy Stays, whoever.

DAN:

Yeah. So you could follow us on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#) at Synergy Stays.

And then our website is [SynergyStaysLocal.com](#).

CORWYN:

That's [SynergyStaysLocal.com](#). Yeah.

I love it. I love it. So guys, look, our listeners, guys, please remember that, please get connected. Short-term rental is not just running a mill. There's a lot of stuff in there.

We've had conversations on there. So don't forget those, but reach out to Dan, make sure you connect with them because he can give you some insights that will probably blow your mind. All right. So guys, look, so Dan, you have had a lot of experiences in this space. So I'm going to frame this as kind of a, I think I'll call it a mic drop question.

It's not that, but it's definitely some hindsight in there, right?

DAN:

You drop it.

CORWYN:

So hindsight, the experiences that you've had, the things that you've been through, if you can go back and knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently? What would you have done sooner? Maybe, whatever.

DAN:

Yeah. I love this question. And obviously I can go into it about a thousand different ways, but I think one of the biggest things that, and we're going to go outside of Synergy Stays, just investing in general and being a real estate investor in this industry is hyper-focusing on one thing, which I did for a while, the sales.

But then I started getting that shiny optics engine, like I said, and I was just trying to do everything. Hyper-focus on one thing, get great at it, build a team in the real estate sales, build a team and now it's off. And now I'm going to hyper-focus on Synergy Stays, build this up, build an amazing team and build an amazing service instead of trying to do 15 different things, be an expert in 15 different areas. Because quite frankly, it sounds a little bit crazy, but my headspace is so important to me these days. Not only is my time, my most valuable asset, because that's the whole reason why we do this is to buy more time.

I'm hoping that's most people at least, but my mind is the most valuable asset. And when I'm doing flips and 15 different things, it is completely easy for me to burn out and not be thinking like high level. And since I've gotten rid of everything off my plate and focused just on Synergy Stays right now, it is amazing. The connections I've made, the opportunities I'm creating, the ways the company's able to go in and how we can build it just to be an absolutely amazing business. So it would be hone in, figure out what you want to do and just go all in on one thing and just be great at it.

That's what I would tell my younger self. Wow.

CORWYN:

I love that. So Dan, look, I want to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule man to be on the show with us today. I really appreciate it.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate you, Corwyn. Thank you for having me.

It was a great discussion. So for our listeners, guys, look here. Legacy, legacy, legacy is intentional. It's built every time you analyze a deal with discipline. Got to learn that, guys.

Build a system. Dan told y'all that last and choose partnerships that are rooted in trust. Wealth isn't what you pass on. The and the structure are. Now, my takeaways from Dan today, real estate gives families a chance to break cycles, to create something that outlives them because it's temporary while we're here.

When you combine strategy, consistency and the right mindset, you're not just investing, you're building a true legacy. So Dan, one more time, I want to thank you for being part of the Exit Strategies Radio Show Family. I appreciate you from the bottom of my heart. Same here. Appreciate you, Corwyn.

Thank you. For our listeners, look, y'all know how I feel. Y'all know what I say. Y'all know, put the two of them things together and I give it to you this way, which is to tell you that I love you. I love you.

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