

RYAN:

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You also have to recognize emotion's always going to be in a deal, for one reason or another. You want to make money. You want that piece of real estate, whatever it is. Emotion's real, so you have to recognize it, and then you have to be diligent about when you're going to call it quits. You don't pass a certain stage of the checklist, sorry guys, it's not going to work out.

I'm going to cut my losses and move on to the next deal. And there's always another deal.

CORWYN:

Good morning, good morning, great morning, guys. Welcome to another fabulous episode of Exit Strategies Radio Show. Hey, I am your host, Corwyn J. Melette, broker and owner of Exit Realty Lowcountry, in beautiful North Charleston, South Carolina. Hey, if this is your first time listening to this show, you sir, ma'am, are in for a treat, because that is because our mission here is very simple. That is to empower our community through financial literacy and real estate education. I always got to give a shout out to those who listen so faithfully. They always give me some feedback.

I appreciate that they enjoy the show. Those who reach out, guys, thank y'all so much for listening. I always got to give a shout out to my favorite guy, Pastor Vanderbilt Evans, Sr. A dude will get me if I don't put that senior on his name. His wonderful bride, Miss Sandra Evans.

Look here, the Troys who listen, and Mullins, and you folks in Mullins and Marion, Hollywood, what you know no good. I'm out there amongst the corner, y'all. Thank y'all so much for tuning in. I'm super stoked and excited about today's show. So every pilot follows a checklist before takeoff, and not because they expect something to go wrong, but because they know the smallest oversight can have life-changing consequences.

So why don't most people use that same discipline and strategy when making one of the biggest financial decisions of their lives on a home or buying investment property? Whether you're purchasing your first home, investing in real estate, or planning your family's future decisions that you make today can impact generations to come. So today we'll explore how those aviation's principles, and preparation, and discipline, and risk management can help people make smarter real estate decisions and avoid costly mistakes while building a lasting legacy. So our guest today is **Ryan Gibson**. Ryan is the co-founder and president. That means he update y'all a Spartan Investment Group, one of the largest self-storage operators in these United of States.

With more than \$1 billion in capital raised and over 7 million square feet of real estate currently being managed across 15 states. Look here, he's somebody you need to listen to. So before entering real estate, Ryan spent years as a commercial airline pilot. Y'all might have flew with

him, y'all, where every flight depended on preparation, checklist, discipline, decision making, and careful risk management. So today, Ryan applies those same principles to real estate investing and helps busy professionals build wealth without sacrificing their careers or family life.

So he joins us to share how thinking like a pilot, we're going to take off y'all. Y'all get strapped in. Y'all know the drill. We don't want no mass falling from the ceiling. And thinking like a pilot can help you make wiser financial decisions, protect your investment and build wealth that lasts for generations.

So Ryan, I want to welcome you to the show and I want to make sure that we cover this on today because pilots understand that every safe landing begins long before takeoff. So in many ways, building a family's legacy works the same way. One principle, every family, every investor should apply before making financial decisions that could shape their future. We want to make sure we answer that question today, Ryan. So Ryan, thank you so much for joining us on the show.

RYAN:

Thanks, Corwyn. It's fun to talk to you. I'm sure I've flown probably you into Charleston, South Carolina when I used to fly for US Airways Express when that was a thing, now American. So thanks for going on and congratulations on the number of years that you've had this radio show. That's pretty impressive going on all decade.

I appreciate that.

CORWYN:

It's always very humbling, very humbling. So Ryan, look, you understand real estate and forgive the pun, but you understand it from a 50,000 foot view. You get it, right? So I want to kind of start with one, you telling our listeners who you are and what you do. And then I want to get into and forgive this pun, but why emotions sometimes cloud financial judgment?

RYAN:

I think people who invest in anything and investing for their family, investing in real estate, whatever it's going to be, I think people need to realize that you are the captain.

You're in charge. You can stop the flight or stop, set the parking brake and take a pause and you're in control. And you've probably been on a flight where maybe there's a maintenance item or the pilot's at the gate and they say, oh, sorry, folks, there's a delay. That's you and in charge of your financial future. You can be in charge of that as well.

And so I think that's where you just have to start to develop the skill of when to stop the flight, right? And also know when you've committed, right? So if you think about it, if you're going on a flight and you're at the gate and you're doing your pre-flight preparation as the captain or the pilot of the plane, and you haven't pushed back yet, you haven't even started the flight and you

find something wrong, you're in control of being able to call that mechanic in to fix it. No big deal. There's no risk. But if you push back and taxi out to the end of the runway and you know you got things wrong with that airplane, you get on the runway and you start barreling down the runway at 160 miles an hour, you're taking that problem into the air. And now it's not as easy just to pull over and stop.

You've got a problem and now you're trying to fly a plane. So you have to understand that as a captain of your financial future, you can stop when you have committed to the takeoff and when you are in your pre-flight stages still where you can still get help. And so we call that decision V1. V1 is the go, no-go speed in a takeoff regime, right? When you're taking off, you're barreling down the runway at a speed at which you can still stop the airplane and come safely to a stop without going off the end of the runway. But after V1, you've got to take the problem in the air.

And so all the checklists that you do in your life, all the preparation has to come before you even push back from the gate. How well have you been trained as a pilot? How well have you educated yourself as a pilot? What procedures have you gone through and what checks have you done? This is all stuff in flight school that you've gone through, ground school, simulator training. Now you're out on the line, you're out in the real world and you're taking an airplane. You've got it. You're the buck stops with you, right? You can have advisors, you can have people, mechanics to help you.

You can have ground handlers to help load your bags. You can have dispatchers that help you plan your flight. But at the end of the day, you're in charge. And I think that's where people need to recognize that, hey, I'm in charge of inspecting this flight for takeoff. And when I get on that runway and I push the throttles full forward and I get to V1, I've got to make darn well sure that my plane is safe to take in the sky and I can complete the flight safely.

And the last thing I'll say about that is your passengers in the back are your family, people who count on you. And your job is to keep them safe as a provider of a household or just someone who's in charge of the financial situation. And it could be either spouse, right? It could be sometimes the wife is in charge of all the family financials. Sometimes it's the father. Sometimes it's both collaborating together, whatever it might be.

So you just have to recognize that you're in charge. And the thing about a pilot is you have to kind of know a little bit about everything, but you're certainly not doing everything. And that's, again, where you can get great advice. You can get mentors. You can get people that help you and shape you and teach you about things.

And this makes a successful pilot. All those things together make a good decision maker. But a little bit about me. I grew up, actually in high school, I got a job selling knives, cutco knives. So shout out to all those that have ever had a knife salesman show up and you were kind enough to buy some nice cutco.

I paid for all my flight training in high school with that. And then I was hired as an airline pilot at 21. And there's a lot of opportunities out there. Even now, being an aviator now, there's a lot of demand for pilots as a lot of people reach retirement age. A lot of baby boomers are retiring out at age 65.

And so I was very fortunate to have a 17 year airline career. But also when I was selling, I got the bug in entrepreneurship, right? I love making my own schedule. I love working really hard. I love the heat of the sale and meeting so many people. And so I fell in love with entrepreneurship, but I just didn't really understand how to apply it.

And so I went down a lot of roads, read a lot of books and got inspired to do real estate. And my neighbor in Washington, D.C., he was just getting back from Iraqi freedom. He served in the army and still does to this day.

And we ended up starting a business together. We started flipping houses and I was doing rental properties. And I love rental properties. Rental properties are great for cashflow and income, but I was really trying to get a great ROI in my life. I was trying to get my time back and doing a lot of rental properties.

I realized real estate is amazing. I can make great returns. But there's a lot of people that want to be in real estate, but they just don't want to do all the work that goes along with that. And that's why we started Spartan Investors. We started it because we wanted to provide people who wanted to have real estate in their portfolio, direct investments, all the tax benefits, all the cashflow, all the upside, but without having to go out and do all the work day to day.

And that's why so many airline pilots have invested with us and so many busy professionals have invested with us because they wanted that real estate in their portfolio, but they didn't want to be managing rental properties all day. And you know who you are. If you're listening to this and you're thinking, that's me, I don't really want to go find a bunch of real estate. I just want to invest in it. That's the vision of who we are.

We wanted to have well-vetted investment opportunities for passive investors. And so that's what we do. We go out, we hire great teams. We have over 200 employees now spread across 15 states, and we go execute self-storage investments and give investors access to multi-million dollar projects at 50K or 100K investment size. So that's what we do today.

CORWYN:

So Ryan, let's talk about the things that go into prepping for what you're talking about. So self-storage, we've had over our years, we've had a number of people that operate in this particular space and everybody has a different approach. Most people got here a similar path, which is they started with fix and flips and all that stuff. And eventually decided to get on trade, look here, trade people and their toilets and what comes with toilets for just their stuff. So what I want to ask you is what does that checklist look like for you or for you and your partner now as

you guys look to evaluate an investment? Because again, I know you got to have a pre-checklist, pre-flight list, so to speak.

RYAN:

It's just like an airplane. When you learn how to fly, you fly a small Cessna. That's what you train on, right? You fly a small four-seater, two-seater airplane, and you learn how to use a checklist. It's a smaller checklist, maybe five or six things on each segment of flight. But when you transition to the airlines, there is a learning curve because there's a lot more systems on the airplane that you have to be familiar with, but you're still using a checklist and you're still flying an airplane and you're still doing the fundamental things that you learned on your first day of flying.

So when you think about transitioning from fix and flip and rental properties to commercial real estate, there's a lot of similarities. You still need a survey, you still need title, you still need a down payment with a loan, you have tenants that pay your rent, and you just have a lot more of them. So that comes with an expanded checklist of things that you have to do. So I would say if you're starting in real estate, make your own checklist. Have your own things that you go through.

Our checklist is now like 700 points long, right? When we started, it might've been 20, then it grew to 50. And every single time you do a deal, you learn something. And if you don't, you're not trying hard enough, I guess. And I think complacency is what gets us, right? You've mentioned in the beginning about how pilots use checklists every time, no matter how good they are. The very first pilots, the top pilots for Boeing, the top check pilots for Boeing, crashed an airplane.

And it's because they didn't do one of the most basic things. This is back in the 1920s or 30s, you can read up on it. They were testing a Boeing airplane and they forgot to remove a control lock from the aileron. So they couldn't actually move the flight controls to take off. So they got to the end of the runway on their takeoff and they crashed.

And it was the most basic thing you could do, but they didn't have a checklist. And because checklists didn't exist then, now they have a checklist. But you think about the smartest, brightest, most capable pilots failing at the most simple thing, and that's complacency. You think, oh, I got it. I've flown this flight 10,000 times.

I don't need a checklist. I don't need to read this, right? And this is where you get dangerous. That's when you actually need to lean in more and get more disciplined in a process, right? If you're doing single family homes and you're like, I've done 30 of these, I don't need a checklist. That's probably when you're going to make a mistake. And that's what they teach you at the airlines.

That's what they teach you in aviation is when you start to over rely on your memory. For people, we're going to forget something and we're not going to do something. So start making

these checklists for your process. You can do it in your phone. I mean, there's great note apps and things that you can do.

And you can say, okay, I'm going to start doing this checklist and make sure I follow it along. And then it just gives you a sense of comfort. Like, okay, I've done the procedures. Why do you think pilots stay so calm in emergencies? It's because they rely on a checklist and a procedure. When you get upside down in investing or you get upside down in real estate, you're going to be panicked if you have no process.

If you have a process and you're methodical about what you do, you're not going to be panicked because you're like, okay, I'm going to get out the engine fire checklist. I'm going to get out what happens when you lose all your tenants checklist. I'm going to have a process and a system to think about this versus just being like, oh my God, I don't know what to do. And I have no process for this. So this is a very good thing that I think that's been instilled in me.

But yeah, transitioning from small to large, I would just say it's different, but it's not overly complicated. I think if you just build on the success you've had at smaller projects, that will really help you for newer ones. But you got to get out there and educate yourself. You got to go to the trade shows. You got to learn from people who are doing it.

Right. So my business partner did one of the, I think one of the most critical things when we were looking about self-storage, we went to a conference, the self-storage association, and he looked up who the speakers were and he emailed one of them or reached out to him and said, Hey, I want to treat you to the nicest steak dinner you can find in Vegas. And he was like, done. So the night before the conference, we sat down for dinner and we talked to a guy who had been doing self-storage for a long time and treated him out for dinner and got a lot of information out of there. And there's a lot of people willing to do that.

I mean, I'm coming on the show, talking about it openly, right? Like if anybody could reach out to me and say, Hey, I'd love to get to learn about your industry a little bit more. It would be one that's your type. Absolutely do it all the time. We have interns, we have calls that people, other entrepreneurs are really excited to help you through this path. Many people have helped me.

And so I just kind of share that, Hey, get out there and talk to the people actually doing it. Don't rely. I mean, yeah, there's books and things like that. That's helpful. But talk to people who are actually having operational experience.

CORWYN:

That's huge. So Ryan, let's shift up a smidgen is I do want to come back around and really kind of drill in on a few other things that you said, but let's talk about, I'm going to say when to say no and why saying no may be relevant, but recognizing those warning signs, essentially, like you said, and I imagine, and you know better than I, there's probably some lights on a cockpit. You just not want to see. So recognizing warning signs and avoiding what many people refer to as FOMO, that fear of missing out. Why are those things relevant?

RYAN:

Oh, there's something called get-there-itis in aviation.

And it kills people where it happened to me the other week I was flying in my private plane. I was the pilot, my family, we had a whole trip to Montana plant dinosaur bone dig. And in Montana, we were going to go to the Clydesdale ranch. It was going to be an amazing weekend. And my wife really wanted to get there.

Right. As a pilot, I assess the weather to be marginal. And I said, well, you know what? We'll fly. We'll take a look. And I had my personal minimums and I got to the mountain pass.

And I said, you know what? I don't feel comfortable. And I turned around and we canceled the whole trip. And you know how disappointing that is to kids in the back, get all your gear, your wife, and everybody's kind of mad at you. But like, this is real estate. This happens, right? You're shaking your head.

You know, like you have your earnest money down. You've got your due diligence money spent. You are a pot committed to that deal. And all of a sudden you're like, you know what? The numbers aren't what they thought they were going to be. And the neighborhood isn't as good.

And I don't think I can execute my business plan and I've got to pull out of this deal. And you're like, you feel horrendous. And now your mortgage broker is upset. Your real estate agent's upset. Your investors are upset, right? You have got to be ready to do that.

But you also have to fine tune your skills on preventing that situation. So let's rewind, right? That decision to blow up a deal when you have earnest money, lender, under contract, all these people lined up, right? That's your V1 speed. That's like, you're about to buy it. And now you're pulling the, you're chopping the throttles, you're slamming on the brakes, and you're trying to decelerate an airplane from 160 miles an hour down to zero before you go off the end of the runway. That's extremely disruptive.

So you know what you need to do better? You need to get better at finding those problems before you even push back from the gate. Because then there's not as, people aren't, you're not taxing out and talking to ground and getting on the runway. Now you haven't smoked your brakes and you have to get a mechanic out to inspect to make sure your tires aren't blown and all this, right? And think about the trauma you just put everybody through in the back. I mean, who wants to go 160 miles an hour to zero in five seconds? Nobody. And you are going through trauma.

So you have to get better at catching these mistakes early. On that flight to Montana, I told my family the night before that we should cancel the trip. I said, we should cancel it. So they were ready. She was fully anticipated.

I mean, I said, hey, we're going to take off. We're going to take a look. And then if it's bad, we're going to turn around. So everybody was kind of ready for it. And so not as disruptive, but that's what you've got to do.

You got to get diligent. You have to understand the process. You have to understand when to call it quits and when to call it quits early. I would say, get used to saying no. As an entrepreneur, you want to say yes to everything and you want to do everything and you want to go, go, go, go, go.

I'm not saying have a crappy attitude, but I'm saying you have to be ready to just walk away from deals because you do get emotional. Oh, it's in my backyard. Oh, that's where I grew up. Oh, that's the neighborhood I really like. These are emotional ties, but you have to stay true to the numbers.

You also have to recognize emotions always going to be in a deal for one reason or another. You want to make money. You want that piece of real estate, whatever it is, emotions real. So you have to recognize it. And then you have to be diligent about when you're going to call it quits.

You don't pass a certain stage of the checklist. Sorry guys, it's not going to work out. I'm going to cut my losses and move on to the next deal. And there's always another deal. You know what they say in aviation? What's that? The day after the accident, the sun is always shining.

So if you just had waited a day, you wouldn't have had that bad weather that killed you. And the same thing is true, right? The accident investigators who come and pick over the rebel of an airplane that crashed, they usually do it on a sunny day. You know why? Because it's usually the next day. The pilot went in the bad weather. They tried to get there.

They forced it, forced it, forced it. All they did was wait a day. We would have had a nice day. And they wouldn't have crashed, right? So I think of the same things in real estate. I tell my investors, I said, hey, if you don't like this deal that I got presented to you, don't worry about it.

I'll have another one in two months.

CORWYN:

Well, to wait till tomorrow, so to speak.

SPEAKER 3:

Building wealth isn't about chasing every opportunity. It's about having a strategy, managing risk, and making intentional financial decisions. At [MelliFund Capital](#), we're focused on helping you build wealth with purpose and create a stronger financial future.

Let's take a short break. 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, blip, 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.

RYAN:

And there's no such thing as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It just doesn't exist. That's a marketing thing.

That's a fear of missing out tactic. I'm like, I've never seen a deal like this. This is the only time I'm ever going to...

No, it's not. Real estate's been around for thousands of years. There's always going to be another piece of real estate you can buy. But that's my advice to that.

CORWYN:

So, Ryan, let's get into this, which is the system.

And I want you to tie this to how you guys operate and what you're doing. The necessity of building systems versus relying on law. What does that look like and how is that executed daily in your own operations?

RYAN:

I don't want to sound too corporate-speak, but we have all these departments. But if you're thinking about real estate, you have got to have a system to get deals. So you've got to increase your deal flow in order to say no more.

So increase your flow to increase your no's. So if you are only getting one or two deals a year and you're looking at them, you're going to want to do all of them because you're only getting one or two. So you've got to figure out what systems am I going to have to increase the top of the funnel? How many deals? I want to know every broker. I want to be on every list. I want to know every website.

And with AI and everything, you're scraping these websites pretty seamlessly. And you want to have as many deals coming into your world. Then you have to have a system for analyzing them. How do I look at all these deals and throw them out as quickly as I can? So maybe you might say, I want to be in certain states or I only want to be in certain demographics or I only want to have certain sized properties or certain priced properties. So now you can throw away a bunch of those deals because they don't meet your criteria.

And your criteria is more about what you won't buy than what it is what you will buy. It's more about what you don't want, not what you want. Well, I want a self-storage facility. Well, be specific. Well, I don't want that.

You got to kind of go through what you don't want. Then you have to have a way of analyzing those deals. So you have to have some kind of a spreadsheet or some kind of an underwriting projector thing that you can kind of go through the packet that you get and put that system in place. And that's become easier and easier and easier and more and more and more accessible. You used to have to have like an underwriter and all this stuff.

You have cloud and AI going into your spreadsheets, pretty streamlined. Then once it passes that, then you can do an LOI. And an LOI, and you got to have a system for that, right? Just have a standard letter of intent, which is making an offer that's non-binding, meaning it's just not, you both can cancel at any time, no commitment. And then if you put out your LOI on a deal that you like, remember you put it through all that screening criteria. So it's something that you would actually want to buy.

So you're serious. You get that accepted, then you'd have to have a mechanism to build a purchase and sale agreement, which is going to buy the property, right? And your purchase and sales agreement is a legally binding document that usually comes with some earnest money or some down payments. And then you have a due diligence period prescribed, which gives you 60 or 90 days to inspect the property and do what you're supposed to do. And you have to have a system to find a lender, which you could easily just put that in Google, put the property in Google, zoom out a little bit, type bank, start dialing for banks, right? Hey, when this market would lend to me, like out on the East Coast with like Renaissance Bank, Bank OZK, it's commercial lenders, right? You've probably seen these branches as you drive by. You start calling up and asking for the commercial broker.

And then you have that system down. You go in and maybe you have your own down payment, or maybe you've got friends and family that are going to be your investors. So that's the kind of assistant that you need. And then we have a committee, me and my business partner and a couple other people sit on a committee. We basically say, once we're under LOI, we'll have that deal presented to us and we'll make sure it's gone through some of its process.

And our checklist is, first of all, is this feasible? Do we like this market? Do we think our business plan is achievable? And then after, if it passes that, then we go to due diligence and we say, okay, how's the structure? What's the inspection? What's the environmental? What's all these things? And then once all that kind of comes together, then it's time to close. And that's a system. And so we have these types of systems in all of our businesses. I mean, I kind of glazed over the capital raising system because there's an entire system to that. How do we find investors and vet them and get them on our list and market to them and get them warmed up for this type of stuff to come and invest in? So systems are everywhere like that.

And I think having a written down process is super powerful. And then obviously when we do our due diligence in that process I just described, each team has their own set of checklist items that they're going through, right? They got to get the survey ordered. They got to get title opened up. They've got to get the lender go, right? All these things that are in checklists.

CORWYN:

That's huge.

So Ryan, this is a perfect place. We've quickly gotten to the end of the day show and I want to make sure we get your information out. So how can people get in contact with you? How can they connect with you and your partner at Spartan?

RYAN:

We have an awesome newsletter, really helpful for self-storage investing. We also have deals that we send out. You can find it your way onto our list by going to spartan-investors.com. So it's spartan-investors.com. Likewise, you can send me an email. Happy to connect with you.

My email is Ryan, ryan@spartan-investors.com.

CORWYN:

Awesome, Ryan. I greatly appreciate it. So for our listeners, guys, look, write it down because this is where you need to learn something right here.

If you ain't get it all ready from Ryan, I'm going to give you what I heard him say. How about that? The biggest financial decisions in life should not be made on a motion alone. Just as every successful flight begins with preparation, every lasting legacy begins likewise with intentional decisions that protect your family and create opportunities for future generations. You know how we are about legacy, right? So Ryan, my takeaway from what you said today, building a legacy is not about making one perfect investment. It's about consistently making thoughtful decisions, managing risks wisely, and preparing the next generation to steward what you've built.

So I want to thank you. Thank you so much for being on our show today, taking time out of your busy schedule to be here. No problem. Thanks for having me on. So listeners, closing, pilots do not leave safe landing to chance.

They prepare long before the wheels ever leave the ground. The same is true for building a lasting legacy. When you, your family, approach homeownership or investing, the financial decisions that you make using preparation, discipline, and long-term thinking, you're not just buying a home. You're laying the foundation or building. You're laying the foundation for generations yet to come.

So for our listeners, y'all know how I feel. You know what I say. 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.