

Strata Community Awards for Excellence 2026

Essay Award

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Strata – The Love Story Not Told Often Enough

It is a common trope in strata management that most managers fall into their roles by accident. Walk around a room of strata managers and ask how they got their start, most have a story but very few would say it was a childhood dream. However, those same persons would also say that, despite their humble beginnings, and the chaos, they have stayed or continue to return, whether or not they can express why. My journey is no different, fuelled by compassion and curiosity and possible gluttony for punishment; it has blossomed into a deep love and obsession and ultimately made me a better person. For me and I believe others, a career in strata management is a love story. One that at times can be closeted out of fear of retribution when it should be celebrated, so I thought I would start with my own *'I cannot fix on the hour... when I began to love you (1)'*.

My meet- cute to strata was hilarious. Prior to my interview I did not know what strata was, but it didn't matter. I had just given birth and did not have anyone to watch my 4-month-old daughter, so I brought her along. What could go wrong?

During the interview, my normally quiet and well-behaved baby girl started to scream and vomit all over me. I patted her and went on like nothing was happening cleaning myself with wet wipes and answering questions. The two men interviewing me, father's themselves, gave a knowing nod and proceeded to hand me a maths test to complete without a calculator and without notice. Exuding charm and elegance, beads of sweat and vomit notwithstanding, I smiled and did the test one handed.

After marking the test my soon to be boss looked me dead in the eye and said - 'If you can handle that and get all answers right, you can handle anything... welcome to strata' *'you had me at hello (2)'*.

It soon became clear there was a certain amount of foreshadowing from my interview. Ever the diligent employee I tend to engross myself in whatever I do. To my surprise, I also soon found I was good at it, my background in service, business, performing arts and motherhood was the perfect combination of skills required. As strata managers, we juggle priorities, we solve complex problems, we calm and soothe, we clean up messes, and we keep our cool (mostly). We often deal with grown adults behaving like children *'as you wish (3)'*.

Soon I really got to know strata, my knowledge and expertise grew, as did my fascination... strata is interesting. There are not many jobs where we can navigate finance, law, psychology, property, construction in one day. I moved companies and gained a more complex portfolio; I started to manage a team and attending SCA events and started to make real industry connections. Swept up in a haze of compliance and legislation and what felt like solving a really satisfying puzzle. Against my will, I was falling *'I hate the way I don't hate you, not even close, not even a little bit, not even at all (4)'*.

Like all grand love stories, I have certainly seen my fair share of difficulty. When I had been a manager only a few weeks a building of mine experienced extreme storm surge and fell into the ocean. How do you navigate that phone call? How do you fix that? I've had hate mail, threats, name calling, put downs and physical intimidation from clients plus workloads that are impossible to stay on top of. I've had moments where I don't know why I stay *'I wish I knew how to quit you (5)'*.

However, as misunderstood and maligned as we are, or feel we are - we sort it out. In doing so we develop long lasting and trusting relationships with committee members, owners and trades alike. Sometimes I feel like I speak to some committee members more than I do my family. I've even had one committee member video call me from Fiji just to say hi (and to rub it in a little). So, the conflict is worth it for what we build, friction is necessary *'I loved her against reason, against promise (6)'*.

This is where it hit me, I knew that I was in love was when I realised the WHY. This is where you can tell the difference between a manager who is just in courtship, infatuation or a situationship with strata, against a manager in love. They understand what we really do and who we truly are. We do more than manage assets, we protect lives and livelihoods. In every one of those challenges, I solved a problem. What we do is more than interesting it is important. Most significantly we help build, support and foster community, what a privilege. In a world where community is dwindling away and we're becoming more isolated; we need neighbours and community to bring us back into the real world *'to me you are perfect (7)'*.

Sadly, many managers get stuck in the fog, in the abuse and the threats and find it hard to celebrate the great parts of what we do. If all that is out there in the media is negative news stories celebrating how they've 'taken down' or 'exposed' another crooked operator, it makes it seem as though corruption is rampant and diminishes the contributions of the 90% of those who work hard and do the right thing. This only encourages more abuse and more closeting. The solution is the opposite; we've all hesitated when someone asks what you do. But I encourage all managers, a 'call to arms' if you will, instead of shrinking... lean in and be saccharine, fill the vacuum with the good and the great. Tell your story, brag about your job, remind yourself and other managers why we love it *'you have bewitched me, body and soul (8)'*.

So, when I say I've fallen in love with strata, that is true. But it would probably be truer to say that I have fallen in love with the important role that we play in our community and the future. I have found meaning and purpose in truly helping others and giving to the community. We have had our fair share of challenges and changes over the past few years, but so long as we keep bringing it back to the WHY we will have a long and healthy life together *'You make me want to be a better man (9)'*.

References:

1. Pride & Prejudice
2. Jerry Maguire
3. The Princess Bride
4. Ten Things I Hate About You
5. Brokeback Mountain
6. Great Expectations
7. Love Actually
8. Pride & Prejudice
9. As Good as It Gets