

Strata Community Awards for Excellence 2026

Essay Award

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Ego-Death and the Resurrection of a Sector: Leadership in a post Strata-Geddon World

Instead of an asteroid headed for Earth, it was a journalist with a camera crew. Unfortunately, we didn't have an unruly crew of drillers to save Earth before impact. On 21 March 2024, Strata-Geddon arrived.

The 7.30 Report investigation didn't destroy the strata sector, but it certainly blew it apart. Foundations were cracked, trust was broken and the Court of Public Opinion declared the sector fair game for all manner of criticism, accusations and the reason for everything that was wrong in the world, ever. At least, everything that was wrong in strata living fell squarely on the shoulders of strata managers.

The thing about an explosion is this: once the dust settles, you have a choice. Rebuild what stood before, or build something better. Building something better means admitting that what was there before was no longer compatible with what is needed now.

The best rebuilds, redoes and resurrections happen when ego steps aside and curiosity takes the lead. Ego death, the moment you realise it's no longer about you, creates space to ask questions without being attached to the answer. It's listening without mentally preparing your rebuttal. It's recognising that, even as experts, we can lose sight of the people living in the homes we 'manage'.

It's not easy. Defending what we do, and how we do it, is human nature. Leadership begins, and change happens, when we let go of the need to be right. That kind of leadership takes courage. It requires putting self-interest aside in pursuit of something bigger.

It's been two years of learning how to be the sort of leader that doesn't just glue the broken parts back together. Two years of unlearning what it means to be a great strata manager and two years of being brave. Most of all, it's been two years of working with, being inspired by, encouraged by, and embraced by other strata leaders who understood the strata reckoning wasn't the end of our story. It was the beginning of a new one.

If we see this new evolution in strata as a cycle, we're about half way through. We've passed through the first few months of shock. The following months gave us fall out, including the Strata-Geddon follow up story by Four Corners. It was about here that I moved from shock to frustration and through to action.

In our action era is where we don't rebuild what was there. The action era is where we stop, we listen and we lay the foundations down for something new. In this era, we've accepted that the explosion happened. We've taken stock. We've put the ego aside and we prepare to let go of the way it's always been. We start making plans for the way it needs to be for a future that offers stability, trust and transparency.

I put my hand up here, volunteered to put myself square in the crosshairs of criticism and be part of the change. It's fair to ponder, why? Well, we all have two options during a crisis. The not much option. This tends to involve complaining. Pointing fingers and trying to glue back together the blown-up pieces of before. OR, the get real, do the work option. The harder option, of course. But when you believe in the future of the sector, when you know that future has the potential to lead solutions for the housing crisis. It's the only option.

What a time the action era has been. Within our small business, within NSW, within the country. For me personally, it's been a journey of learning where it's gone wrong. That meant being willing to admit it did go wrong. After twenty-five years in the sector, this wasn't easy. I've met an immeasurable number of strata professionals. Intelligent, capable and empathetic individuals who absolutely deliver outstanding services. I've been mentored and inspired by leaders in the sector who are focussed on delivering an ethical, owner-based service. So why are strata managers being dubbed the 'used car salesmen (who also get an unfounded bad rep)' of the property sector?

This is why we needed ego death during Strata-Geddon. The only way forward was to accept that good intentions weren't enough. However well we believed we were serving owners; it simply wasn't translating into trust. To understand why, we had to stop explaining and start listening. Really listening. Especially to the owners who were the most frustrated and disillusioned. And listening wasn't enough. We had to be prepared to make hard decisions, challenge long-held assumptions and lead meaningful change.

In our business, we made the decision early, and honestly, easily, that we needed to move our business away from commissions. The realisation that so many of my colleagues were doing the same thing was the ahh-ha moment that not only was the strata sector going to survive, it was going to evolve. There was a clear path forward, and it wasn't to defend what our clients were telling us they were not comfortable with.

The process of major, structural change isn't easy. The unknown is scary. Maybe even terrifying. But it's worth every anxious moment, every cross-road and every moment spent waist deep in feedback, data, criticism and opinions.

Every information-forward communication, transparency-focussed information channel opened, and every admission we can do it better is moving all of us forward. It's a literal weight of worry that disappears.

The exciting part about the second half of our evolution, the next era if you will. All the leaders who have gone through ego-death. Those of us who have let go of 'how it's always been' and embraced 'it needs to change' -there is nothing but opportunity ahead.

The resurrection of our sector is afoot. It's the time to listen and act. Experiment and be brave. More than anything, the time to learn without preconceptions is right now. Leadership isn't about knowing everything. And it's not about having every solution. Leadership is not just a willingness to put up the mirror, it's an enthusiasm to do so.

References:

7.30 Report https://youtu.be/1vxRHCQck1c?si=x4k_mnOt-01fj2qX

Four Corners - https://iview.abc.net.au/show/four-corners?utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared