



LYNDA HEARNE

How did Hearnest begin?

We opened our first office, Bournemouth in 1996 and now there are five. It's a lovely story. I met Lyndon Le Boutillier (now my husband) at the gym in January 28 years ago. As our friendship grew, we both realised that owning our own business was a common goal. Lyndon had been in Estate Agency for 15 years and I had gone down the education route with a master's degree in business management. We just both clicked and plans quickly fell into place with a business plan, suppliers, branding and office premises. We handed notices in at our jobs and took that leap. "A new beginning, a different way!" was our opening message with our main aim and strapline "Where Service Counts".

Has it been a smooth journey?

Absolutely not! The beginning was amazing. We implemented new ways of marketing, maximised advertising and enhanced brochure production for all our properties. We brought colour to our marketing and quickly gained favour with the public. We employed staff who had customer service backgrounds and trained them our way. We tried to break the mould of estate agents and gained respect early on. We wanted to grow organically by recommendation and

reputation and the recommendations kept flooding in. Life was grand! However, over the years the market has taken some big turns and we really had to learn to adjust.

We opened offices in Ferndown and Ringwood and at one point were not sure if we could hold on after the credit crunch. Fixed costs were rising, fewer buyers and sellers; it was bleak. The tough times made us work even harder and smarter, and we learnt how to ride the extremely hard storm. We have a strong faith and that helped. We trusted that God would sustain us and thankfully he did! Family events along the way also brought extra pressures. After being married in 1998, we had four children, and this was certainly a time of juggling family life and business.

Both our father's died, mine unexpectedly, and in 2006, before the birth of our daughter Grace, Lyndon had a life changing accident which took him out of the business for over a year (just to add to the credit crunch). However, as we look back, we are thankful to our fantastic team of employees, friends, family and God and it's made us appreciate all we have, so we are grateful for the challenging times. Challenging times still exist. I sadly lost my driving license two months ago (totting up on points) so I am now getting around on my bike Daisy. I have four months left and it is very cold presently. It's another experience from which I will learn!

What do you do differently that has aided your success?

Lyndon always says "everything". Those that know him, know just how thorough he is and shows attention to detail at every turn. His knowledge is amazing! With over 40 years of experience, he just knows housing inside out. I am more front of house and enjoy doing the viewings. He is the engine room of the company, and it just seems to work. There are now four other shareholders/directors across the branches who are all fantastic!

We all have a strong work ethic, and we were raised to be independent and to appreciate all we have. We still work on old fashioned principles of honesty and integrity along with face to face contact and welcoming offices. Online, or working from home agency just isn't us. We like to be out on the front line dealing with everything in a professional and heartfelt way. I'm personally motivated by kindness. Nothing brings me more joy than when I've helped someone beyond what they expected. Buying/selling houses is often done during challenging times in life. We are here to be that comfort, support and strength, always contactable personally during times of stress or happiness!

So as Lyndon and I go into our 28th year, we continue to love what we do. How wonderful to have my best friend and husband by my side. I am truly blessed!