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Know your ‘why’

The property-buying process has many similarities to leadership. Not leadership in the corporate sense, but personal leadership: the ability to make clear decisions, stay focused when things get uncomfortable and follow through over time.

The four Ds

Across many leadership frameworks, one commonly referenced model is the four Ds: Desire, Determination, Dedication and Discipline. When you overlay these four traits with the journey of buying your first property, the parallels become obvious. Buying property is not passive. It requires you to lead yourself well.

Desire

Desire is your ‘why’. It’s the emotional driver behind wanting to buy property in the first place. This could be stability, freedom, a sense of progress or creating options for your future. The desire may feel obvious, but it's worth pressure-testing it. Many of the exercises around finding your why are designed to help you connect emotionally, not just intellectually, to the goal. Be careful though. Some prompts may reveal that the desire is not strong enough right now, or that it's more of a 'someday' goal than a short- or medium-term one. That insight is not a failure. It's clarity.

Determination

Determination is what carries you through friction. This is where the process gets real. Paperwork, saving constraints, lending rules, delayed timelines and moments of doubt all show up here. Determination is not about being stubborn. It's about staying engaged when progress feels slow and adjusting your approach without abandoning the goal. Most people who stall in their property journey do not lack information, they lose determination when the process takes longer or feels harder than expected.

Dedication

Dedication is the willingness to prioritise the goal consistently over time. This might mean saying no to certain lifestyle upgrades, sticking to a savings plan or regularly checking in on your progress instead of avoiding it. This is where buying property moves from intention to behaviour. Dedication is shown in small, repeated actions. Reviewing your numbers, keeping documents up to date and staying in contact with the right professionals even when there's no immediate reward.

Discipline

Discipline is doing the boring but necessary things, even when motivation dips. This includes budgeting, managing spending, maintaining communication with your partner and not drifting off plan when something shiny appears. Discipline creates momentum. It's what turns desire into outcomes. Without discipline, the goal remains theoretical. With it, buying your first property becomes a sequence of manageable steps rather than an overwhelming leap.

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You don't need to become a 'leader' to buy property. But you do need to lead yourself. When you approach the property buying-process through the lens of the four Ds, you give yourself a framework for staying grounded, focused and realistic from start to finish.

One of the biggest challenges when buying a property is staying engaged either with your savings plan, or property search, for the long haul. This is going to take time and if you have a spouse or partner who isn't as on board as you, it's only going to make the whole process harder. Anyone who has achieved anything great has coupled sacrifice and time together. In the quest for your first property you need to know that six months is considered a short amount of time so start to get match fit and get used to incorporating the 4Ds into your lifestyle. Think of this period of time as bootcamp for property. The good news is that what you put attention to will yield results, so imagine what would happen if you applied laser-focused attention to your property quest for the long term.

You'll be tempted along the way. That's not a maybe; that's a certainty.

'Want to come and see Sabrina Carpenter when she comes to Australia?'

No, I'm saving for my first property.

'You need a new air conditioner in your car and it will be $1500 to fix, so you should just buy a new car!'

No. Spending $1500 is less than $15 000, or more with a car loan. I'm saving for my first property.

'Rentvesting sounds complicated. Why don't you just wait another year and see what happens?'

No, waiting without a plan is just procrastination with better PR. I'm moving forward now. (We'll talk about rentvesting in chapter 6.)

'Interest rates are high. Maybe property isn't a good idea anymore.'

No, cycles change. Preparation and discipline matter more than perfect timing and I'm playing the long game.

You really must bake into your mindset that your first property purchase may take some time, require sacrifices and you'll need the four Ds to rinse and repeat.

Buying your first property is hard enough on your own. Doing it with a partner who is not aligned makes it significantly harder. This doesn't mean you need identical money personalities, but you do need agreement on the destination and the trade-offs required to get there. If one of you is in 'property bootcamp' mode while the other is still spending like nothing has changed, friction is guaranteed.

Before you get deep into saving or inspecting properties, have an honest conversation about what the next six to 24 months will actually look like. What are you both saying no to? What are you prioritising? What sacrifices are temporary and what's non-negotiable?

This is where the four Ds need to show up as a team sport. Shared desire keeps you emotionally connected to the goal. Determination helps you push through the boring and uncomfortable parts together. Dedication shows up in daily decisions that reflect the plan, not impulse. Discipline is sticking to the agreement even when temptation knocks loudly.

When partners are aligned, progress feels lighter. When they are not, every financial decision becomes a negotiation. Property rewards patience, consistency and teamwork. Get on the same page early and the rest of the process becomes far more manageable. Use this process as a flashpoint for the relationship and do not be afraid to get some couples counselling to really ensure you are both aligned with this property venture — and also other areas!

Your behaviour is driven by your 'why'. Truly ask yourself, 'Why do I want to get into property?' As beautifully complex humans we often have greater needs or desires driving us and our decisions without realising it and it's crucial to understand what's happening behind the scenes. This helps us line up the right path to owning a property. Read the statements below and see which ones resonate with you.

'I just really *want a home of my own.'*

If this is you, we hear how important this is and completely respect how emotional the idea of owning your own home (*your* own home) can be. A home becomes a key part of your identity and memories — it's where you celebrate birthdays, invite friends around and build families. There really is no greater feeling than knowing that where you sleep every night is yours and you can adjust the space to suit your lifestyle and wishes. With this book, together we can find your way there.

'I'm done with renting! I hate the instability, I hate moving, I want security and to be able to change things in my home the way I want.'

If you're tired of a lack of stability — tired of rental inspections, rent hikes and packing boxes every year — buying your own home can bring a real sense of stability and control. There's comfort in knowing that no-one can suddenly sell the property from under you or stop you hanging a picture on the wall. It's about more than owning an asset; it's about putting down roots and feeling secure in your space.

The step from renting to owning is a big one and it's worth going in with a clear plan. Start with your borrowing capacity and budget: not just what the bank says, what you're comfortable to afford. Think about location, lifestyle, compromises you're willing to make to enter the market sooner. The goal is not perfection — it's stability and the long-term benefit of being a home owner.

'I'm not sure I'm going to be able to afford to buy where I want to live. What options are there for me to get into the market?'

This is where a lot more first-home buyers are finding themselves with the current state of property markets around the country. Rentvesters are born here — in this thought process — rather than deciding to become a rentvester out of a financial strategy. Not being able to afford to buy where you want to live and not wanting to move should not rule you out of the property market. It's about pivoting, looking at all your options and making a decision that's right for you. To make an informed decision, you first need to know all of the options that are open to you.

'I don't ever plan on buying a home to live in, but I do want to grow wealth through property.'

You are an investor — a property investor. Your focus will be finding the right asset, a property that performs well and allows further growth of your portfolio. The right type of asset and location for your first purchase will be important, as will your finance structure to ensure you are setting yourself up for the longer term plan.

The key to this strategy is removing emotion and thinking about numbers first. You'll want to assess cash flow, understand the costs of holding a property and choose locations with strong fundamentals like infrastructure growth, employment hubs and limited housing supply. Interest-only loans and offset accounts will be key in your finance strategy as your goal is to hold more property, and available cash can make a huge difference to your options.

Remember you aren't buying a home but a vehicle for wealth creation. Treat it like a business decision, not a lifestyle one, and your first investment can be your launchpad for financial freedom.

'My goal is to get into the market asap — where I live is secondary to this.'

If your goal is to get into the market as soon as possible, you're already thinking like an investor, even if you don't think of yourself as one yet. The mindset is all about momentum, building equity, learning the process and positioning yourself for your next move. Where you live is secondary; your first property is a steppingstone not a destination. Your focus will be on buying property in growth areas, adding value through improvements and using this property as a springboard for your next move.

'I'm not ready to settle down. I may work elsewhere to where I buy but want to consider getting into the market early.'

A common strategy is to buy property to live in for now not knowing your plan. It's okay to buy without knowing your big plan. A lot of people wait until they know the big plan but we'll let you in on a secret: a lot of people never know their big plan. They take action with the tools they have at the time and when they look back realise they never actually had it figured out.

If your work isn't stable, property might not be the best fit right now. But if you're moving around or planning big life changes and you're still happy to take on the responsibility, don't rule it out just because things feel uncertain.

'I want to save up and buy where I am. I love where I live and plan to stay here.'

This one is about the emotional pull of a particular place. Where you live shapes your lifestyle, your friendships, your routines and your work opportunities. This is the most common driving force for first-home buyers. They are buying a home to live in and already live in the area they would like to be in the long term. They may move one day but it's not on the cards right now and they may like to upsize down the track but they are pretty settled in their area. They have family or friends in the area and their work is here. They have a community they wish to stay close with. If this is your plan, the focus is about looking at what you can buy in the area you wish to be a part of and making a decision based on this along with what you can afford.

A few questions to consider:

- How much are you willing to trade off for location?
- Would a smaller home or unit in your preferred area make you happier than a larger house elsewhere?
- Would buying in the area you want to live put you at risk financially? Would you be overcommitting mortgage wise?
- If you have a dream suburb and that is key for you yet a house is not affordable, maybe rethinking the kind of property you buy is necessary. And always remember, your first home is just that: your first home. The majority of people don't end up where they first buy but their first home was integral for the next steps.

Why getting in early matters

Getting into the property market early has been the secret weapon for a lot of people who've built solid financial security. But let's be honest: for many young Aussies today, buying a place feels about as achievable as winning a renovation reality TV show. The old 'save a deposit, buy a house down the road' formula just isn't the go anymore. To make it happen, you'll need to think differently from how your parents did, and that's totally okay. In fact, we'd go as far as to say it's the only approach that really works now.

We've never had someone come to us a decade after buying a home and say, 'Honestly, we should've waited'. But we have heard plenty of regrets from people who could have bought earlier and didn't. Our goal is to give you the best shot at getting into the market as early as makes sense for your life, not with pressure, but with clarity and confidence. When you're ready to buy, we want you to understand the process, make informed decisions and have the right people around you so the whole experience feels less stressful.

One of the big reasons property has helped so many Aussies build wealth is simple: over the long term, values tend to rise. Our market is pretty unique in that way. Steady growth has made property a go-to asset for both homeowners and investors. But if you're living in or around a capital city, you've probably looked at prices online and thought: 'How on earth will I ever buy here?' Or you've imagined finally scraping in…only to be chained to a monster mortgage. Totally normal thoughts and exactly why thinking creatively about how and where you buy can make the whole thing feel far less overwhelming. There are more options than you might realise and exploring them can open doors you didn't know existed.

Why your ‘why’ matters more than anything else:

- It drives better decisions.
- It helps you understand your own priorities before starting the process.
- It helps you focus on the strategies that will actually work for you.

Turn off comparison

Personal finance is exactly that: personal. Everyone has different incomes, expenses, lifestyles and goals, which means there’s no point comparing your journey to someone else’s.

Sure, you might scroll past a friend online who’s earning more and getting into property faster, and that’s great for them! But it doesn’t make your own path any less valid. Especially for younger generations, the road into property looks very different today than it has for decades.

The key is to focus on what you can achieve right now. Buy the best asset you can with the resources and lending options available to you. That — not someone else’s timeline — is what gets you closer to your dreams.

Don’t wait for a magic solution

Now is not the time to sit and wait for an inheritance, or for markets to ‘crash’ before you purchase your first property. The best thing you can do is understand your ‘why’ and build a plan that makes that ‘why’ happen. Once you know the reason you want to buy — security, freedom, stability or a stepping stone to build wealth—you can stop outsourcing your future to luck, timing or someone else's plan. Taking action, even small steps, puts you back in the driver's seat.

A common concern is what happens if life doesn't follow the plan. Relationships end. Jobs change. Kids arrive earlier or later than expected. Health issues pop up. This isn't failure, it's life. Your first property doesn't need to perfectly match your future self. It just needs to be resilient enough to adapt as your life evolves. That might mean a property that can be rented out if you need to move, or one that doesn't stretch your cash flow so tightly that one change knocks everything over.

Many people worry that buying a home locks them in forever. In reality, most first properties become stepping stones rather than destinations. Homes turn into investments. Investments turn into deposits for the next place. Sometimes people sell and reset. None of these outcomes mean you failed. Planning for flexibility from the start is one of the smartest things you can do and it allows you to move forward without needing your entire future mapped out in advance.

Turning your 'why' into a property brief

Knowing why you want to buy property isn't a fluffy exercise. It's a practical filter that shapes what you buy, where you buy, how much risk you take and how you behave when emotions run high.

Your 'why' turns an abstract goal into a property brief. Without it, buyers tend to drift, react or copy what others are doing. With it, decisions become clearer, trade-offs become easier and confidence improves even when the market feels noisy.

When we asked our podcast listeners about property and their ‘why’, two dominant motivations consistently appeared. Security and stability on one hand and wealth creation on the other. Many buyers sit somewhere in the middle, and that’s completely normal. The key is knowing which one is driving your decisions right now.

Why I want security and a place of my own

For many first-home buyers, security is the primary driver. This often shows up as wanting stability, control and relief from the uncertainty of renting. Concerns about rising rents, lease terminations, moving costs and feeling like you’re always living in someone else’s space came through strongly in our survey.

If security is your core motivation, your property brief will likely prioritise liveability over optimisation. This doesn’t mean ignoring long-term value, but it does mean choosing a property you’re genuinely comfortable living in.

This usually looks like:

- buying in a location that supports your lifestyle, work and personal networks
- choosing a property you could see yourself living in for several years
- prioritising functionality, layout and comfort over speculative upside.

For some buyers, this may require a difficult but honest conversation about location. If you can’t afford to buy where you currently live, you may need to consider adjusting expectations, compromising on property type or exploring relocation. Security comes from ownership that's sustainable, not ownership at any cost.

A security-led 'why' also helps protect you from emotional overspending. When the focus is on stability, buyers are often more disciplined about not stretching themselves to the limit just to secure something marginally better.

Why I want to build wealth early

Another common motivation is using property as a tool to build wealth. Buyers driven by this 'why' tend to be more comfortable separating where they live from where they invest, especially early on.

This group often values:

- capital growth potential over short-term comfort
- buying earlier rather than waiting for perfection
- being open to rentvesting or buying where they can afford rather than where they ideally want to live.

A wealth-focused property brief usually includes consideration of growth corridors, infrastructure plans, employment hubs and long-term demand drivers. These buyers are often more analytical and less emotionally attached to the property itself.

However, this approach requires clarity. Without a strong 'why', buyers aiming for wealth can get stuck in analysis paralysis or constantly second-guess whether they are making the optimal decision.

Your 'why' keeps the strategy grounded. It reminds you that the goal is progress, not perfection.

When you don't know your why

When we surveyed our listeners, a clear pattern emerged. Those who had already purchased a property consistently pointed to the same mistakes, most of which stemmed from being unclear on their underlying motivation.

Here are some to consider:

- *Overstretching*
  When emotions take over, buyers can spend more than they intended because the property 'feels right' in the moment. Without a clear why, it becomes easy to justify decisions that undermine long-term financial comfort.

- *Underbuying*
  On the other end of the spectrum, some buyers play it so safe that they purchase a property that doesn't meet their needs or support their goals. This can lead to early regret, forced upgrades or unnecessary transaction costs.

- *FOMO-driven decisions*
  In hot markets, fear-of-missing-out can override logic. Buyers rush decisions, skip due diligence or compromise on fundamentals. A strong 'why' acts as an anchor when the market feels frantic.

- *Too many outside voices*
  Friends, family, social media and headlines all have opinions. Without clarity, buyers can become paralysed or pulled in conflicting directions. Your 'why' helps you filter advice rather than absorb it all.

Family advice can be one of the most confusing parts of buying a first property. Parents and relatives often mean well, but their experience is usually based on a very different market, different lending rules and very different price points. What worked for them may no longer be realistic or even relevant. This can leave buyers torn between professional advice and family expectations, especially when emotions and money mix.

The challenge is learning how to listen without outsourcing your decisions. Useful advice tends to be specific, informed and aligned with your goals. Unhelpful advice often sounds absolute, fear-based or nostalgic. You are allowed to thank people for their input and still choose a different path. Your first property needs to work for your life, not someone else's memory of the market 20 or 30 years ago.

A clear 'why' doesn't guarantee perfect decisions, but it dramatically reduces regret.

Your why will change, and that's okay

Your motivation for buying property isn't fixed. In fact, it's expected to evolve as your life changes. You may start with a desire for independence or financial momentum. Later, priorities might shift to family, schooling, community or long-term lifestyle. The important thing is not consistency over decades, but clarity at each stage.

The response to our survey showed many buyers felt pressure to 'get it right forever' with their first purchase. This mindset often leads to delays or unrealistic expectations. Your first property doesn't need to solve every future problem. It needs to align with your current why and your current capacity. As long as your why is clear at the time of purchase, your strategy can evolve with you.

Your why and your professional team

When you start working with professionals such as brokers, buyers' agents, accountants and conveyancers, your why becomes incredibly useful. It gives context to your numbers and direction to your strategy.

Professionals can help you with the how, but only if the why is clear. When you articulate your motivation, your team can:

- structure lending to support your priorities
- suggest property types and locations that fit your goals
- help you understand trade-offs rather than default options.

Without this clarity, advice can become generic or misaligned.

Property in action

Rather than treating your why as a one-off exercise, turn it into a simple reference point you can revisit.

Consider the following prompts and reflect on them as a complete statement rather than isolated answers:

- Why you want to buy property right now?
- What do you want this purchase to do for your life over the next phase?
- How this property supports that outcome.

For example, your internal statement might read like one of the following:

- ‘I want to buy property to start building long-term wealth early. My goal is to get into the market in a sustainable way and let time do the heavy lifting. This property supports that by being in an area with long-term growth drivers, even if it’s not where I live right now.’
- ‘I want to buy property because time in the market matters more to me than buying my forever home straight away. My goal is to get started with a property that can grow in value and create options later. This property supports that by being in a location with strong long-term demand, solid fundamentals and a price point I can comfortably hold.’
- ‘I want to buy property because stability matters more now that my life has more moving parts. My goal is to live somewhere that supports family routines, schooling and a sense of community over the long term. This property supports that by being practical, affordable to hold and in an area we can realistically stay in for years.’

Keep your statement in mind throughout the process. When decisions feel difficult, return to it. If a choice doesn’t align with your why, it deserves closer scrutiny.

Our lived examples

Rach’s experience reflects how a property plan can evolve alongside your why.

In her 20s, the goal was simple. Build financial independence. Lifestyle took a back seat as she rented modestly while purchasing where it made sense financially. The focus was on properties that aligned with a long-term wealth goal, not emotional attachment.

In her 30s and as a parent, the why shifted. Schooling, community, neighbours and emotional security became priorities. The property strategy changed accordingly. The earlier decisions created options and the later decisions prioritised lifestyle.

Neither phase was right or wrong. Each was aligned with a clear why at the time.

For Glen, his initial why for his first home was about 50/50. His first home was purchased when he was 31 years old. He knew that he didn't enjoy renting and was building a business at the time, so stability was his goal. He is also a more conservative personality and the thought of always having to move caused some anxiety. At the same time, he knew that the right purchase could have a longer term financial upside. This, coupled with him being a spender-type personality, meant having a mortgage and some financial pressure in that area of his life (paying down a home loan) would provide some forced savings!

At the time, he had a state-based stamp duty exemption, a cash grant for a brand-new home (he was lucky enough to buy a brand-new townhouse) and he knew it was going to be a stepping stone so he set his mortgage up with a view that it would be an investment property one day. Glen now rents and has investment properties and as he is established in his career and business, needing to move around isn't as stressful.

The point is nothing is forever and your why for your first property purchase will change in the years after your purchase — and that's okay.

Start with this…

There's plenty to consider for your own situation. Have a think about:

- Which of the 4Ds you struggle with. How can you lead yourself better?
- Your 'why'. Why are you buying a property? What's driving you?