



ACK Story: Dean O'Brien

1. For how many years were you at Assumption College Kilmore?

I was a boarder in Kilmore for five years from 1987 to 1991.

2. Can you share a brief overview of the past few decades of your professional life?

I started in Real Estate in 2001 after leaving the family business. I began as a trainee in a Real Estate office in Berwick, then progressed to sales agent and finally became the sales manager. After spending 9 years with the one company, I realised it was not going to be my final destination and in October 2010 I started *O'Brien Real Estate* in Berwick.

We expanded a year later with our second office in Narre Warren and then quickly opened our third office in 2012 in Cranbourne. With the rapid growth of the south eastern suburbs of Melbourne, a bay side office in Chelsea approached us about joining our brand. This decision was the start of our journey to becoming a franchise business and growing throughout Melbourne.

We opened our Chelsea office in 2013 and today we are continuing to expand, with 27 offices established across metropolitan Melbourne. We have also opened additional businesses that are aligned with Real Estate, such as conveyancing companies and office and board signage.

This amazing journey now sees the O'Brien Real Estate Group employ in excess of 350 people, with ambitious plans to continue growing

3. In what ways did ACK help prepare you for your commercial responsibilities?

ACK played a big part in my learning to communicate with a broad variety of personalities. Being a boarder away from home, at such an early age, gave me a level of independence, resilience and strength I don't believe I would have developed if I had remained at home. Also, being part of a large community gave me a great sense of belonging, as well as pride in what I do and who I represent.

4. Are there particular teachers or coaches from ACK that stand out in your memory (and why?)

I was extremely fortunate to have benefited from numerous amazing influences during my time in Kilmore. Of these, there were 3 stand-out individuals for me:

- Mr Ray Carroll
- Br Doug Walsh
- Mr Tony Noonan

Each of these men taught me a great amount regarding the important priorities in life and I have subsequently implemented many of their character traits, behavioural standards and leadership qualities into my own life and throughout my businesses.

5. Are there many people from your days at ACK you remain in contact with today?

Yes. I still see many of the friends I made at ACK and we remain in contact as much as possible. As I've got older, I have found the "ACK net" is wider and more giving than I first understood.

6. Some people believe success is merely a product of luck and coincidence. Looking back on the obstacles you have overcome since leaving Kilmore, and all you have achieved, would you agree with them?

I don't believe success is about luck or coincidence. I believe success is a by-product of self-belief, bold dreams and strong desire. My association with ACK has shown me this repeatedly. All of the success stories coming out of the school involve variations of people demonstrating commitment, passion for a cause and consistent giving. There is very little luck and coincidence involved in any of those stories.

7. What values are most important for you to live by?

For me, I have a very clear purpose: "To create a place to facilitate growth." This purpose is guided by five values:

- Family
- Mutuality
- Realising Potential
- Embracing change
- Health and energy.

Without this clear purpose and associated values in my life and business, it would be extremely difficult to achieve my objectives and remain the person I want to be for my family and my team.

8. Which people have had the most influence on your life and why?

I have been incredibly fortunate to have met so many great people along my journey with the values I aspire to follow. Some of my current influences are:

- Business – Josh Phegan, who I have engaged as a business coach for over 7 years.
- Life - Larry Fallon, who has been a close family friend and has done amazing work in business, whilst maintaining strong values.
- Family - My father, although he has now passed away, left an amazing legacy for me regarding the belief, strength and resilience required to succeed in business and as a father.

9. When did you consider yourself to be successful?

My immediate reaction is to say I still don't consider myself to have achieved success. I have had some amazing times building this business, but because I am always striving to achieve more, it is too early to say I am successful. On the other hand, because I have had the chance to share our unexpected growth with so many outstanding people in my organisation, I do have a shared sense of achievement. Also, I consider myself extremely fortunate to genuinely love the work I do, so perhaps that is another measure of success.

10. Is there a particular failure you remember most vividly? What did you learn from the experience?

With all of the positive growth our business has enjoyed, there have also been numerous failings that I wish I could take back. However, I am mindful these setbacks have taught me so much. One of my major failings was forgetting about the people I love at home. I was on such a professional high that I forgot about the people I was doing it for. I had to slow down and become much more engaged with my family at home.

In the work environment, people respond to the energy the leader provides and at times I wasn't providing the best energy in the office. I stopped looking at what I thought were small issues, but to others were important matters. This caused disengagement with my team and a misalignment of priorities. People are everything in my business and they need me to be the very best version of myself every day, to ensure I develop the very best version of them.

11. If you had 1 piece of advice to share with the Year 12 ACK students of 2019, what would it be?

Personalities and behaviours are very important, as they define the culture of where you work. Behaviours, such as infinite learning, selflessness, humility and the desire to grow the people around you, are critical. Personalities are important, but the correct behaviours are even more vital to success. A high-performance business requires behaviours such as calmness, consistency, resilience and caring. You can never build a business without people and I believe the best way to operate and grow a business is to be the ultimate team player (regardless of whether you are the leader or work colleague.) My other piece of strong advice is to find what you love doing and be resilient in approaching the goals you set in your life.