

**EPISODE 680**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[0:00:00.0] ANNOUNCER** Welcome to the Real Estate Syndication Show. Whether you are a seasoned investor or building a new real estate business, this is the show for you. Whitney Sewell talks to top experts in the business. Our goal is to help you master real estate syndication.

And now your host, Whitney Sewell.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:00:24.4] WS:** This is your daily real estate syndication show. I'm your host Whitney Sewell. Today, our guest is Ashton Levarek. Thanks for being on the show, Ashton.

**[0:00:31.7] AL:** Thank you for having me, pleasure to be here.

**[0:00:33.9] WS:** Yeah, I'm honored to have you on the show Ashton. A little about Ashton, if you don't know him, he's the founder and managing partner of Valkere Investment Group. Ashton acts as a network facilitator and acquisitions lead. Understanding that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Ashton is focused on teaming with opportunity-minded investors, seeking to build equity and maximize profitability for everyone involved. As an Air Force special operations parachute jumper, a sniper and a special warfare team leader, Ashton is no stranger to leadership under pressure. No fail mission planning and execution.

Ashton, that's an impressive bio. And again, I wanted to thank you for your service, just grateful for our men and women that serve and I know even now, you're fixing to be deployed again so just grateful for your service, just want to thank you for that.

But welcome to the show and I'd love for you to just give us a little more about who you are and just Valkere Investment Group, you know, a little bit about who that is, what you all do and let's jump in to your super power.

**[0:01:33.4] AL:** Thanks again for having me on, I'm definitely an honor, I've watched your show for a while, or listened to your show for a while, I love it. Yeah, a little about myself, my brother and I, we partnered back in 2018. We started out with small multi-family and really, the reason was, we wanted to create some other source of income, multiple streams I income. The military – it's tough to actually make income that will last after the military, even with or retirement and everything and if you get like 100% disability still.

We started looking at other avenues, real estate was one I'd heard about, my brother heard about so we partnered and I couple of duplexes. And then, everything we did though, we partnered with other people too. We partnered with other people's money and we just started to realize that the economies of scale or better and larger multifamily and so, we jumped into a 13-unit and then a 16-unit, the 16-unit was our first official syndication.

We partnered again and we did, we're doing a 220 unit in Columbus, Ohio and 120 unit in Greenville, Texas right now. We're excited, we're always learning, always growing. But that's kind of the name of the game, right? Nothing's stagnant.

**[0:02:44.1] WS:** That's right. That's impressive, you all started with some small multifamily. Similar to my story but started with small multifamily, you learned about scaling the business just being able to do larger deals, what was it that gave you that confidence to be able to jump from – What you say, a 130unit or the smaller multifamily property like that to 220 unit?

**[0:03:04.8] AL:** Confidence, I've kind of always been that – I'm a fan of General Patton's saying, not because he's in the military but just because I really like the saying. Good plan, executed violently this week is better than a perfect plan executed next week. We didn't have everything, we didn't know everything, we didn't know what we didn't know of course. But we knew that we had to take action and we knew where we wanted to end up, right? We had had a vision for the future, we had a number in our mind and a number of units, a number of cash flow and so on.

So long as you have that vision in mind, we knew that we could shift the strategy and we saw that multifamily did it better so one roof over two units or one roof over a hundred units, what's the difference, right? Yes, you have to get more people involved. I'm not trying to over simplify it

but I think if you're clear about what you want, I tell people sometimes, why learn to ride a bike if really what you want to do is fly?

We focused on what we wanted to do, we wanted to grow into something big so let's do it. We started talking to brokers. We started talking to other syndicators in the business and we jumped in. That's the path we took and we were lucky because we put ourselves in the right position to meet the right people to meet the right asset managers, property managers, contractors, we really got out there, built our brand and built our network and that's what facilitated it really.

**[0:04:26.2] WS:** Nice, well, I'd love to hear more about that deal and maybe we can have you back and us talk about some deal specific stuff and what you all are doing. But with your training, and even in some of the stuff you had sent to us, you mentioned one of your super powers was mindset and you wrote, "Success simply requires clarity, commitment and daily action."

I love that and I'm a big proponent for just focusing on just mindset. I pushed that back a lot of that too my military training and law enforcement and things like that, I would imagine you probably do as well. I'd love to hear just your story around that and just the mindset piece behind you personally, where that came from, your training and then just really how that's helped you in your real estate business as well. But then as also give the listeners some actionable steps, ways you can help them just to get their mindset and just concrete so they can move forward in their business as well.

**[0:05:20.1] AL:** Yeah, absolutely. It's been a 20-year adventure for me. But starting with clarity, you have to have clarity of what you want. What do you truly want? What are you trying to achieve in this world in your life? And really, that goes – I like doing an audit of my whole life where am I health wise, where am I with my family, you know? Where do you want to be?

If you're not clear about where you want to be then that's the first place you need to start. Where you want to be and I think *Traction* is a great book if you ever read *Traction* or people are looking for a good book on how to reach out and make their plan their five-year, three-year plan or whatever.

But ultimately, what it's saying is just, reach out on the future, where do you want to be in three years? And then backwards plan from there. That's something that the military is huge on, you know, we have a target, the mission isn't dictated by how we get to the target. How we get to the target is dictated by the target itself.

For example, our vision is to have so many units or our vision in the military is to go after this certain guy like are we going to fly there or parachute in, you know? It really depends on the target, not necessarily on what you like, if you like multifamily, great. But is that getting you to where you want to go? I think really doubling down on being clear before you start anything is really important.

And then the next one would be, you know, commitment. I like commitment because I've been through a lot of selections, I've been through a lot of some people would say, really tough selection called for the military. I think the one thing that stands out is the people that aren't committed don't make it. That goes with anything. If you're not committed to learning to roller blade, you're not going to. As unfashionable as it is, you're still not going to get it. But you have to commit and commit every day. It's a daily thing. Anybody that's been married knows, it's a daily thing, you have to build on that every day. You have to renew that commitment every day or at least every week.

Yeah, I think the commitment part, you know, you have to have faith in yourself obviously and a lot of people, that's where it's kind of goes hand in hand with taking action every day. Every time you take action, you building that faith, you're building that confidence in what you're doing, that's why I always come back to get clear, clarity, commitment and take action.

As you do each one of those, they'll play into the next one and then back again and as you get clear, you can commit better and as you commit, you can take action and as you take action, you can reclarify your goals and reclarify where you need to be. I think those three steps like you said are very essential to success in any realm.

**[0:07:51.8] WS:** I love that, really, you're talking about just personally, your family and your health and those things but knowing where you want to go, where you want to be, you know,

what was it though that gave you that mindset, you know? I know, I contribute so much of just my – the never give up mentality, right?

Just, “Nope, we’re going to keep going, we’re going. My feet may hurt but I’m going to keep marching, right?” That kind of mentality, you know, from the military. And you’re talking about being clear on where you want to go. Is that something you’re documenting? Is that something that’s changing on a weekly basis or annual basis. What’s some of that process for you?

**[0:08:28.4] AL:** It’s not changing on a weekly basis. Like I said, the vision stays the same but the strategy may change. For example, at the beginning, the vision was to have so much cash flow so that we could essentially quit our jobs and be able to live off our own business, right?

That was the vision, that hasn’t changed but we’ve realized new strategies to get there, right? Multifamily syndication is the one we’re focusing on. That may change in the future too, I mean, who knows, something might happen with politics with whatever, you know? And you may want to shift to I don’t know, buying gold or whatever.

The point is, you have to be clear about what you want, where you want to end up and then be flexible in your strategy. We’ve been able to do that with real estate. We’ve been able to do that with real estate. I mean, obviously, there’s 101 ways to get into real estate. But that’s basically it. We’re just staying fluid with the strategy.

Strategy, we try to do 90 days prints and hit a one-year goal and that one-year goal lets us know that we’re on track for three year and then our five year. That’s how we do it so if we shift strategy, it’s only every 90 days, we don’t do it weekly, we don’t do it daily. But I think that’s a very key point so that you don’t get that shiny object syndrome as they call it, you’re looking at everything.

“We can get into Airbnbs or we could start doing, –” I don’t know what else but you know what I’m saying. We start flipping or you have to have a clear strategy to actually follow.

**[0:09:52.6] WS:** I love how you go right into just the commitment and you mentioned the people that are not committed are not going to make it, I can relate to that so well, just military and

bootcamp, being a bootcamp to other training just like you talked about, you know? Other specialized training gets more difficult typically and you see people fall out.

You know, even in the law enforcement or whatever it may be but even in real estate, so many people try to get in and I just relate it to the military training as well. I mean, if you're not committed, it's going to show pretty quickly. You talked about renewing that commitment every day, is there something you do just to pretty sure, remind yourself of that commitment or just be able to stay committed and stay in that frame of mind.

**[0:10:31.6] AL:** Yeah, absolutely. I don't know how I got into this but when I was in high school, I started journaling and you know, a lot of my knuckle dragging meathead friends, they might kind of scoff at that but I think it helps you stay focused, you know? I used to get up every morning and I still do this, I get up every morning and I would write or look at my goals and this became very helpful and I haven't done it every single day in my life but it became very helpful when I was going through challenges or going through selections and actually trying to achieve something.

I wake up and write down my goals, "Where do I want to be?" I'm clarifying where I want to go and I'm recommitting to those goals every day. And then, I write down what I'm going to do to hit those goals that day. What are my actions that I'm going to take that day to move the needle? Whether that needle needs to be moved like one foot or two miles or whatever.

Am I going to make an offer on the property or I might just going to reach out and talk to somebody or maybe I'm just going to learn a new strategy. That's it. It's different for everybody but I really think doing that every day, clarifying, committing and taking action every day is very important. I think you'll find out with most successful people, they're very clear committed and taking action.

**[0:11:42.6] WS:** I would say, most of those people are also doing your next thing just daily action. There is something daily that they've done and probably there's been some time. I know with me it was this way, there is like this time where my daily routine has changed and part of that was like getting up early and doing some of the things you are talking about, being up early, educating reading figuring out what I can do that day. What are anymore of those daily actions

that you were taking especially initially to get into the real estate business that you can share with the listeners?

**[0:12:08.5] AL:** I'm a big reader. I just inhale books. Podcasts are great obviously but you know the book that really got me on a – I really like *The Miracle Morning*. You know *The Miracle Morning* he sets out those I think it's six or seven action steps savers and I think it is very effective you know? Silence, affirmations, visualizations I mean is education really inscribing? I think those are very powerful and for much of the same reason we're saying about we're saying right now just to keep that education going.

Get clear about your goals, visualize your goals, sit in silence and reflect I mean it is just really powerful and I think that book lays it out really well especially because he backs it up with like the hundreds of successful people that follows kind of practices but that's a great place to start if people are looking for a routine. You don't have to get up at 4:30 in the morning to do it too. You can get up later but I think if you have kids, if you're married, if you have another job, getting up early is essential.

And I get up around 4:30 to 5:00 every morning because I have two kids and I have another job but make it fit your schedule.

**[0:13:17.4] WS:** That is interesting you brought that book up. That was a book I read when like my morning routine changed completely and I could say that so much has come from that by being committed to getting up early. And it's like maybe I didn't learn a ton from that book but it helped me to structure my morning so then I could educate myself about so many other things. Tell us though, I know you are working with your brother or business partner through all of these as well. What does that look like for you all together to be doing this? Is he also in the military?

**[0:13:44.9] AL:** He was. He got out and went back to college and he did the smart stuff. He is an IT manager and that's interesting. That is a whole other topic. We are completely opposites. I'm more visionary, big picture. He is more detail-oriented, systems process, yeah. He would be a great guy to talk to about setting up your business, the systems applications of how to get everything running smoothly.

But anyway, yeah working with him initially I thought we were very much alike but we did a – I look at doing a DiSC profile and we read the book *Traction* and you kind of look at who needs to fit in where in your business. And we realized that yeah, we are complete opposites and like I said, he's more detail-oriented and I am more big picture and so at the beginning you think you have to do everything. So, I am forcing myself to learn underwriting and do due diligence and read all of these and go over the T12's and all of that stuff and I hated it but I thought I had to do it.

Which it is good to know that. I am not saying you should not know it. I am saying you should absolutely know that stuff. If you can focus on your strengths that is what makes partnerships work. Instead of trying to force somebody to do something or ask them to do something that they're not good at or comfortable with, finding somebody to fit that in the seat of the bus. The book *Good to Great* talks about that's essential in a partnership, in a team, whatever.

So, we are really big on bringing in the right partners, bringing in the right team members. So, working with my brother has been a continuous evolution of our relationship. So just learning what we're both good at and what we can focus on and actually bring to the business and help the business move forward but like I said, *Traction* was a great book that helped us with that and The DiSC Profile is really good as well if people are looking for references and how to build a team and stuff like that.

**[0:15:28.0] WS:** What's been the hardest part of this syndication process or journey for you Ashton?

**[0:15:32.7] AL:** Probably the hardest part is defining what to do next because you don't know what you don't know, right? You're learning a new skill but I can tell you that the cheat code right now and I am happy to share because this is the cheat code that we found and I feel like you're an example of it: Branding. If you can brand and market yourself with today's social media and the reach you can have through the internet, it can be so powerful because people have to know you to like you and actually trust you to work with you, right?

If they don't know or like you, you'll never get their trust but you have to start with know, so they have to know your brand. You have to be out there, you have to be networking, you have to be



talking about what you are doing, providing value. You have to be doing that if you want to grow and that is what led us to our current partnership with another apartment syndicator, which has really catapulted us into larger syndications. So, I think that I call it the cheat code, that's it.

I am not a video gamer or anything but that's what I think of it is like that's the cheat code to business. I think Gary Vaynerchuk says it best. He says, attention is the currency of business in today's world, and I think that is absolutely right.

**[0:16:46.0] WS:** If they don't know you, they can't trust you, right? They are not going to invest with you and so, well said Ashton, no doubt about it. What is a way that you have recently improved your business that we could also apply to ours?

**[0:16:57.5] AL:** I think something that is really easy I mean everybody I think what you did was awesome. You started a podcast, that is a great thing to do. We haven't done that yet and you have a very good podcast and I think you got in at the right time because now everybody has a podcast. It is insane. But I think something you can do and should do is start a blog or write an eBook. Do a bunch of research on a specific topic that you don't think is covered in your area of business and write an eBook and put that on your website.

And now you have something free that you can give to people. It is not hard to write an eBook, it is not hard to get an eBook published. But now you have something free you can give to people that will invite them to come to your website and see what you are doing or you can do a blog and then you are just doing once a month or once a week even, you are writing about a topic that you don't think is covered or that is of interest right now and provides value to people and again, people can sign up for that.

Now you have people continuously looking at your content and you're educating yourself at the same time, which is huge, right? Because if you don't stay educated, stay on the top of what you are focus is, whether small multifamilies residential, whatever or multifamily you're not going to stay relevant and as this thing is evolving man, new stuff is coming out all the time. I mean look at where we are right now. Everybody is at home, wearing mask as they go out and things are changing all the time.

There is an election, there is so much stuff to write about and share, those are two things I think are very powerful. A blog or an eBook, obviously a podcast or a YouTube channel is powerful as well.

**[0:18:31.5] WS:** What's your best source for meeting new investors right now?

**[0:18:34.8] AL:** I think LinkedIn is very powerful but I really like to get in front of people. I am a people person. I think that if you can find good virtual meetups, which meetups should be doing right now because everything is shut down for the most part, virtual meetups are great. We have our own virtual meetup, you know? But there is plenty of virtual meetups where they have like a guest, there is a networking session and Zoom has facilitated this.

I mean hats off to them, they are doing and really smart about it now they are making breakout rooms where you can – and in fact, I saw you on Brian Briscoe's meetup a few months ago maybe but yeah, same thing. You get together, there is a guest speaker. It brings so much value, you watch Q&A and then there is breakout rooms where everybody can talk and you can network with people and I think that is really powerful. Getting in front of people is I mean they could see you 100 times on social media and never talk to you.

**[0:19:25.6] WS:** What is the number one thing that's contributed to your success?

**[0:19:29.1] AL:** I would say clarity, commitment and daily action. We have already talked about that but I think you know the last thing is partnerships that's by getting out there and meeting people and finding the right people to work with making sure that your value's aligned, making sure your focus is aligned but partnerships. Absolutely partnerships. No one is smarter than all of us and if you want to go fast, go long, go far together, right? We want to go far.

So, we're looking for partners, we are looking for people to work with, you know? And that is what business is right? Building relationships and making things happen.

**[0:20:01.9] WS:** And how do you like to give back?

**[0:20:04.0] AL:** We partner with a couple of syndications with non-profits. We are really happy with that, so right now we are partnering with a non-profit that build playgrounds that are accessible for the handicapped. So, we are really happy to be doing that. There is multiple ways we give back obviously through education and providing content as well but I think that is the one we're most proud of right now.

**[0:20:25.9] WS:** Nice, well Ashton it's been an honor to meet you. Again, thank you for your service. I just can't thank you enough for that just level of risk that you take for all of us that just enjoy the freedoms that we have. Thank you for just elaborating on the mindset. I can't say it enough, I mean I talk about it every time I talk to a group of people personally as well but just the clarity and commitment and the daily actions and I just think you have laid that out very well.

And I know if the listeners will – I mean just start doing those things alone, they are going to start seeing results like I did myself. I am grateful for your story and you being willing to share. I'd love to have you back and let's talk about the 220 unit or one of those deals and we could also there is numerous other things I know we could talk about. So we welcome you or your partner back either one. Tell the listeners how they can get in touch with you and learn more about you?

**[0:21:12.5] AL:** You can go to our website and get in touch with us there. It is [www.valkere-group.com](http://www.valkere-group.com) or my brother and I are both on LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram. Our company has a LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook page too. So [valkeregroupp.com](http://valkeregroupp.com) or Valkere Group. If you just type in Valkere Group, it's the only one on the web like that. So, we're always happy to talk to new and experienced investors, always happy to talk to people that have questions about what we're doing or whatever.

So, thank you Whitney, it's been an honor to be on here. It really has and I really appreciated your podcast over the years and really look forward to seeing where everything goes in the future.

**[0:21:54.7] WS:** Awesome, that's a wrap Ashton. Thank you very much.

**[0:21:58.0] AL:** Thank you, I appreciate it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[0:21:59.8] WS:** Don't go yet, thank you for listening to today's episode. I would love it if you would go to iTunes right now and leave a rating and written review. I want to hear your feedback. It makes a big difference in getting the podcast out there. You can also go to the Real Estate Syndication Show on Facebook so you can connect with me and we can also receive feedback and your questions there that you want me to answer on the show.

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[OUTRO]

**[0:22:40.6] ANNOUNCER:** Thank you for listening to the Real Estate Syndication Show, brought to you by Life Bridge Capital. Life Bridge Capital works with investors nationwide to invest in real estate while also donating 50% of its profits to assist parents who are committing to adoption. Life Bridge Capital, making a difference one investor and one child at a time. Connect online at [www.LifeBridgeCapital.com](http://www.LifeBridgeCapital.com) for free material and videos to further your success.

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