

'REAL ESTATE COMES NATURALLY TO JOÃO GUERRA'

IN Portugal

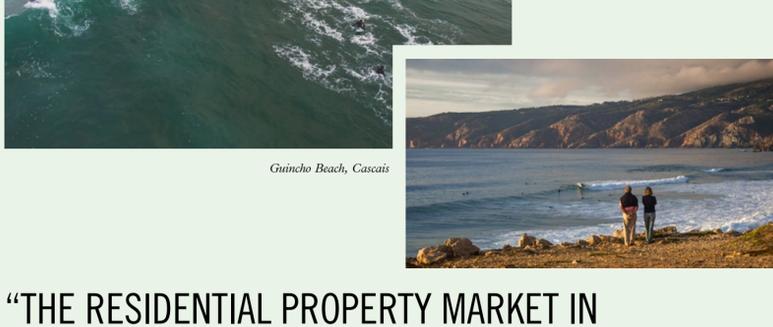
FROM THE CREATORS OF  Vgvisie



PEOPLEMAKEtheCITY

João Guerra came up with the idea to launch a real estate office in the Quinta da Marinha district at Cascais; situated between the Lisbon metropolis and nature, between the beach and the mountains. 'My company brand "Marinha Real Estate" is well received, as it is connected to the most affluent residential area of Portugal and with the sea.'

Following our conversation, João Guerra sent me a brochure in English he has developed specially to promote his business. He describes himself as an estate agent working 'in the premium segment, with access to many confidential and off-market opportunities'. He has the privilege of having direct access to wealthy buyers and investors.



Guincho Beach, Cascais



"THE RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY MARKET IN PORTUGAL PAYS LITTLE ATTENTION TO A CLIENT'S LIFESTYLE"

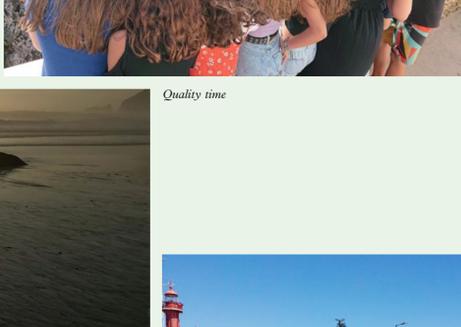
The brochure spells out his mission: "Our main goal is to help our Clients to live life at its best, both from a residential perspective as well from a business and investment perspective. Life is about balance and we must enjoy it at the most from every angle. The place where we live, work or invest plays a fundamental role in the life we have. Get the best return on investment for your life with us!"



João Guerra (left) and Luis Figo / Partners in Football Dream Factory

This is not your only enterprise. So how do you balance it with your various other commitments?

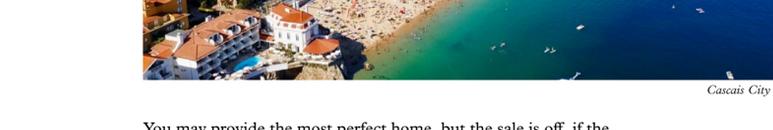
"Though I am still very active in the management board of my other businesses, I dedicate most of my time now to my new role as an estate agent to grow my new enterprise with a vision to greatly expand it. The residential property market in Portugal is still very transactional, and as a result, little attention is paid to the client's lifestyle and life purposes. Which type of food does he like, what are his friends like and how does he prefer to relax? Many of my competitors do not take into account how you can build a long-term base of trust.



Quality time



"REAL ESTATE CAN BE EXCITING AND EMOTIONAL, INSTEAD OF ONLY TRANSACTIONAL"



Cascais City

You may provide the most perfect home, but the sale is off, if the lifestyle is incompatible to what the client wants. It looks as if people only want to make as much money as possible in the short run. This provides a great opportunity to work with a different proposition. Real estate can be exciting and emotional, instead of only transactional. You can invest your money in an office block, a hotel or a sports academy that will probably yield the same return, but you will never have that same sense of excitement depending on your personal perspective.

"How did you end up in real estate?"

"Three years ago, I bumped into one of my friends in the coastal town of Cascais. He owned a house in the Quinta da Marinha district, where all the wealthiest people live. At the time, he asked me if I knew somebody through my network in the world of football that could be interested to buy that house that had been in the market for over two years. I made a few inquiries and had a stroke of beginner's luck. I managed to sell that house very close to its asking price of around 3 million euros in three weeks' time. From a lifestyle perspective, I found the right buyer.

And then things went fast?

"I acquired a taste for residential property and started investing my own money in it. I invested first in an apartment in central Lisbon and sold it to a client from South Africa. This real estate entitled him to enter the Portuguese Golden Visa programme. This is a 5-year residence permit for the entire family. It does not only give access to Portugal but provides the opportunity to travel freely throughout the Schengen area. Subsequently, I got involved in the development of residential properties. Currently, I am developing a touristic housing project along the coast of Alentejo, the most beautiful paradise of Portugal. This project will integrate a distillery that will produce the famous Portuguese brandy type of drink called "Medronho".

It looks as if you always mix business with pleasure.

"If you are open for it, business and pleasure can intermingle. With me, that tends to be the case. I used to play a lot of tennis, now I play padel tennis. Even during a game, a business opportunity may suddenly arise. I grab that opportunity with both hands and do not bide my time. I make small distinction between weekdays and weekends. This also allows me to be that proud father that can clear his diary to attend his daughter's afternoon ballet performance on a weekday. The dispute between time for the professional life and for the personal life means little to me. I lead a balanced life as I have only one life to live, not two. Your work can be pleasant and relaxing at the same time if you feel passion about it. Then, work becomes your "hobby", and your business associates become your "friends". All this makes sense as long as you deliver"



João inside the Figo Academy building

What do you see as universal entrepreneurial values?

"Dedication, resilience and passion for the business. It has to come from inside you, not because it is trendy.

Which profession would you have chosen if you would not be an entrepreneur?

I would have been a rock star. I have been in bands from an early age but I am a bad singer and a lousy musician. I still must set up a business project based on music. That will happen, for sure!

Which dream did you have at the start of your career?

My first dream was starting a "dream factory" for less privileged young football players, providing them equal opportunities. During the first fifteen years following my Economics degree, I worked in the FMCG sector, fulfilling marketing and sales roles for Mars, Unilever and Heineken always having clear that I was preparing to start my own business one day.

How have you changed/grown in the past years?

The corporate businesses is a highly protected environment in which everything is well defined. After fifteen years I ended up starting my own business where I had to learn that I am responsible for everything. Finding excuses for failure is not an option. You have to achieve your goals and that's it.

What qualities/skills have you consciously honed?

I am naturally more creative and social. Particularly during my first years as an entrepreneur, I have consciously worked on improving my

organisational and financial skills.

What has made a particular impression on you during your lifetime?

In my first job, I had a great experience selling chocolate bars door to door across Portugal, preparing myself for a management job. Mars would not let us use the word 'problem', just the word 'opportunity', no matter how difficult the situation was.

What adversity has shaped you most?

In my company Dream Football, me and my business partner and football legend Luis Figo were confronted with a political decision to withdraw from the project all together. I had just quit my job at Heineken and my wife was pregnant with our second child. At that moment, I had to apply the basic principle I had learnt at Mars, 'There are no problems, only opportunities', clenching my teeth and reinventing the project.

How are you influenced by success?

When I manage to achieve my goals, I try to maintain my balance and develop speed. I find problems and setbacks most energising, because they encourage me to tap into my creativity.

Which instance of success has influenced you most?

As the marketing and sales director at Heineken Portugal,

I managed to claim market leadership with the brands Sagres and Heineken in five years' time, after being second for many years.

What decision do you regret most?

Some years ago, I deliberately ended organising live sporting events business to pursue my ambition to scale the Dream Football digitally. I dropped a solid and structured business which I am now rebuilding.

What characterizes your leadership style?

I have a firm trust in people. If my co-workers are involved and the team spirit is encouraged, combining a professional work attitude with lightness and pleasure in working relationships, we can get the best out of the team and achieve the best results.

Which entrepreneur do you admire most?

Benno Van Veggel is a businessman whom I admire because he has managed to combine every aspect of business with time for family, friends and sports. For me, that is the true measure of success. In business you must refrain from getting caught in an obsession that annuls the beautiful journey that is life. That may sound philosophical, but I really mean it.

Speaking of which, what is your life philosophy?

Enjoy every moment. Find a good balance every day.

How do you stay grounded?

Every day, I keep in touch with family, friends and practice sports. I insist on having lunch every day with someone I like, and then take the time to talk mostly about things that have nothing to do with work.

What does sustainability mean to you?

The approach to sustainability should be holistic, since everything we do is interconnected: the environment, business, people's motivation, health and education.

What do you do if things do not go your way?

I analyse what is going on as quickly as I can and focus all my energy on finding the opportunity or solution.

What was your highlight in 2020?

Creativity. In spite of all the bad things the pandemic has brought us, using my creativity felt like a priceless experience.

What is your ultimate goal as an entrepreneur?

Every day, I look for people who are happy, involved and enthusiastic about life. This philosophy should become more embedded in real estate.

When are you successful?

When I generate long term trust.

Which issue do you most think about?

The world we are building for future generations. I would like people to re-educate themselves to respect

each other more, because everything starts there.

As an entrepreneur, what do you want to leave for the next generation?

I would like people to realize that they do not have two lives to live, one for work and one for fun.

What role does age play to you?

To me, it plays no role whatsoever. It's all about people.

In the weekends?

I do/ don't work, because... I don't have that rule.

Which investment have you given / do you give a lot of thought?

Creating a new business in a consolidated market like real estate, with a new way of thinking, requires a vast deal of focus, determination and organising skills.

What makes you laugh so much that you cry?

The natural fun with friends over a beer or a glass of wine, horsing around with family and kids in general. The simple things in life, devoid of any pretence.

What was your best business lunch?

It is always the next lunch. I am naturally curious and always enthusiastic about what is yet to come.

What was the best party you have ever thrown...

My 40th birthday party. I invited all my best friends across the world. Some in person some attended online. They were forced to hear me scream and sing for three hours. They all fear my 50th birthday in two years' time.

If you want more information, please do contact me.

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