

Ten Minutes with...

Mark Lawson Founder of MDCI Project Managers



EXPERIENCE. MARK HAS WORKED IN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT BOTH IN THE UK AND IN SPAIN FOR THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS.

“This is the best time to invest in the last 10 years”

SUR IN ENGLISH

Mark Lawson (FRICS) is from Cheshire in the UK, and came to Spain in 1965 when his parents built a hotel. Educated in Spain and in the UK, he decided on property development as a career and now has more than 25 years of property development experience in both countries. He worked for Sunley Holdings PLC, then as Project Director of Resort Design and Construction in Europe for Marriott Vacation Club International, before establishing MDCI Project Managers in 1999. His company specialises in hotels, resorts and luxury villas and has delivered over 2,300 residential units on 40 different projects. Mark also lectures at business schools in Malaga and Seville as part of their Project Management faculties. He lives in Marbella with his wife

Driekje and three young sons, and is a season ticket holder at Manchester United with his elder son Matthew.

1. Why did you decide to set up a business in Spain?

At the time I was working at Marriott on the development of three of their European Resorts, and due to the success of these I was being approached by various other companies who wanted to receive the same service. I thought: “I can still work for Marriott and set up my own organisation,” and also be more involved in differing projects at different stages. So I spoke to Marriott and agreed to service

them and others from my small company. It was also an ambition. I needed to develop my own pathway, and this was my moment, so I leapt at the chance.

2. What important changes have you noticed both in the market and in the country in general in the years you have been here?

Because I have been here longer than most I have seen transformational changes in the country. As a lad I remember the death of Franco and the establishment of the Constitution. Spain has advanced so dramatically in all areas in the last 30 years that it is almost unrecog-

nisable from the quiet, parochial and “relaxed” country it was. Leaving aside the evident improvement in quality of life, education, industrial efficiency and communications, the “can do” attitude of most of the youth of today is one of the most admirable qualities. There has always been a market for property here due to the already known, tried and tested benefits - and the ever growing numbers of people of northern Europe wanting to spend time here. This was so 30 years ago, it is now, and it will continue to be so in the years ahead, in spite of downturns that are caused by a number of factors often unrelated to the life-

“Buy as close to the sea as you can afford, and have an independent survey done”

“Growing numbers of people from northern Europe want to spend time here in southern Spain”

“Before making an investment, seek specialist advice from registered professionals”

style people are wanting.

3. What kind of clientele do you have?

As I run a project management company, the people who approach me for help are normally those who wish to get a project constructed and delivered to certain guarantees from the outset. This would mean that a person with a limited budget for a villa, or investors who wish to assure their stakeholders of the potential for profit from the outset. Similarly, developers who have been disappointed economically, quality-wise or with late delivery in the past, and even banks that need to know how much it would cost to complete a project they have had to take back from a bankrupt developer.

4. Is it still worthwhile investing in southern Spain?

All the statistics point to the obvious fact that this is the best time to invest in the last 10 years, particularly if you want to build your own home, as prices are low on land and materials and there is availability of good builders.

5. When do you think we will start to see a recovery in this region?

This region has long depended on the investment from people from northern European countries, so the answer would be when those countries are back at full speed so we will be here again.

6. How can confidence in the market be regained?

Confidence depends on a number of combining factors such as the improvement in the economies of our purchasers and investors, the increase in the value of sterling, the increase in the value of assets, banks starting to lend again, and not forgetting, the definitive approval of the Marbella PGOU (Urban Plan). All of these would serve to raise confidence levels.

7. What steps do you recommend first time buyers take?

In all cases seek specialist advice from registered professional experts in their field - and even then do not necessarily take the first advice you are given - take a balanced view.

8. What are your top three investment do's and don'ts?

Do buy as close to the sea as you can afford, do buy in a consolidated urbanization and do have an independent survey done by a Chartered Surveyor. In contrast, don't buy a bargain in an unfinished project unless you are a developer, don't buy off plan and don't neglect the paperwork, permits and bulletins!

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