

## Thomas and Mark - In Their Own Words

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Company News, New Developments, Spanish Real Estate News, Marbella Real Estate News



In conversation with Thomas Harper and Mark Strasek, Managing Directors and Founding Partners of Asset Folio

**Folio:** Tell the readers why you decided to set up the company

**Thomas:** “One of the main reasons that we started Asset Folio over a decade ago was a lack of market information. At the time it was not at all clear what a euro would get you in terms of sq.m.

“We would always have the same question – ‘Why is that property on the Golden Mile selling for that price?’ - and no one could answer you,

“Our philosophy at Asset Folio has always been that, you are going to pitch something, how can you fully understand the process of selling a project without really understanding what is selling and what the price is? If you cannot understand that, then how can you possibly justify the price to a potential client?”

**Mark:** “We started Asset Folio coming off the back of the great recession. We began to see a demand from investors who were coming into the market because prices had fallen. The market was starting to look very attractive and that was when we started to offer our projects, packaging them together to as an investment to buyers coming in.

“Where we really got going was with Los Naranjos in Manzana 1, built by Insur Group. We packaged the development up

into 24 units and sold 22 in the first three months to investment buyers, mainly from the Middle East.

As a result, the share price of Insur Group trebled, mainly to the fact that at the time property sales were stagnant, especially with new developments, because everyone was staying away from them.

**Thomas:** “The main reason behind this was the data. It was the information that we provided to the clients that allowed them to make an informed decision”

**Mark:** “We built on the back of that momentum of selling developments. We gained a reputation for taking on good products, initially from an investment angle. “

**Folio:** What are the principle reasons that investors come to Asset Folio?

**Thomas:** “When big clients come us, the main thing that are looking for is information. As a developer or private investor of family fund, you do not want to waste your time. There are probably four or five companies that you are going to sit down with properly and decide if you want to work with them”

“The amount of potential clients that we speak to has doubled or tripled. This is mainly because there are those that have been misled, and are now trying to get out of the mistakes that they have made and get a bit more clarity. That is where we come into our own by being transparent and honest”.

**Mark:** “Every piece of the puzzle of a project has to work, and it starts on what it will sell for. Everything else has to structure into that”.

**Thomas.** “In a recent meeting, a client asked why should they use Asset Folio, and I replied that the answer was very simple. Our reputation as a company is staked on it – if we take your project on and we fail, it is ‘game over’, so we cannot afford for it not to work.

“Investment groups want to know what you can provide for them. They want to know that you can provide the relevant information, and have the security that you can sell the project,

**Folio:** What is the process when Asset Folio take on a project?

**Mark:** “It takes a huge amount of work, in preparation, in getting all of the marketing ready, in getting the sales strategy ready, pinpointing the price points, creating a price strategy throughout the sales cycle. We work with the developers all the time to have the best outcome for the development, as a product and as a development. That process, even if everything goes smoothly, is three to three-and-a-half years.

**Thomas:** “The cost and the investment that we put into a project is ten times what it used to be, so we have to be confident to commit as well. Our core business is developments that we advise through the entire process. We do all the contracts and the legal work and manage anything to do with the ‘back end’ of the project.

**Folio:** What are your thoughts on Marbella as an investment?

**Mark** “Marbella is a mature and safe investment and there are so many markets that feed into it. It is becoming increasingly attractive around the world, and we have seen a lot of Americans starting to come into the market in recent months

“I would say that it Marbella is now on a par with the south of France. Malaga keeps growing and attracting big business businesses and that is that is going to solidify Marbella’s reputation

**Thomas:** “I have been to several investment lunches, including a recent one for a tech company that was looking to raise €50 million, and not one of them has been about real estate. We are now seeing global businesses that are relocating to Malaga and Marbella”

**Folio:** Finally, what would you put Asset Folio’s success down to?

**Thomas:** “Our reputation, being able to back up what we say, and being ethical in our business”