

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

🕒 1 DAY AGO

Building a WA success story

By Trendsetter Homes



Never one to seek the spotlight, the managing director of Trendsetter Homes, Select Living and Crest Residence has spent much of his career focused on the work itself – building homes, leading teams and steadily growing a business from within.

When Mr Agostino completed a management buyout of the building company where he had started his career as a teenager, he expected challenges. He did not expect a global pandemic.

Within months of taking ownership of Trendsetter Homes in 2020, COVID-19 had disrupted supply chains, driven unprecedented construction cost increases and placed enormous pressure on builders across the country.

For many companies, the years that followed proved fatal. For Mr Agostino, they became the ultimate test of a leadership philosophy built on discipline, resilience and long-term thinking.

"Every day it was something new," he said.

Escalating material and labour costs created constant uncertainty, with project budgets changing dramatically within a matter of months. Mr Agostino said there were times he questioned whether the business would make it through the disruption.

Six years later, Trendsetter Homes has emerged stronger than ever. The business has grown from eight employees to more than 50, while sister company Select Living secured more than 450 contracts within 18 months of launching in 2024.

The growth is notable in an industry that has seen numerous builders collapse under the combined weight of labour shortages, fixed-price contracts and escalating construction costs.

Mr Agostino attributes the outcome not to bold gambles, but to consistency.

"Plan for failure and expect success," he said.

"I establish the worst-case scenario in every instance, work diligently to mitigate every risk I find, and then we go 100 per cent."

The approach reflects a career built from the ground up.

Mr Agostino left school at the end of Year Nine, not because he had a detailed plan, but because he knew traditional education was not for him.

"I don't learn by sitting and listening, I learn by doing," he said.

Joining a building company as a trainee supervisor, he discovered a passion for construction, problem-solving and the coordination required to bring projects to life.

Over the following two decades, he worked through every level of the organisation before becoming one of Western Australia's youngest registered builders and ultimately securing ownership of the business he had joined as a teenager.

His contribution to the industry has since been recognised through a number of honours and awards, including being named a 40under40 winner and receiving the prestigious Master Builders (WA) Ric New Medal for Excellence, awarded to emerging leaders making a significant contribution to Western Australia's building industry.

Leading through uncertainty

The transition to ownership was challenging even before COVID arrived.

The buyout process brought emotional and commercial pressures, while the pandemic introduced a level of uncertainty few business leaders had experienced before.

Mr Agostino responded by focusing on the fundamentals: cash flow, transparency, relationships and culture.

The company maintained strong communication with clients, worked closely with subcontractors and remained disciplined about growth.

While others expanded aggressively during the housing boom, Trendsetter's approach was more measured.

"We're not corporate and we never want to be corporate," Mr Agostino said.

Growth accelerated after the business emerged from the pandemic.

Recognising that the company needed greater scale and diversification, Mr Agostino made a deliberate decision to invest in systems, people and structure.

The business rebuilt its operating platform from the ground up, introducing new software, processes and management structures while carefully expanding its team.

The investment was not simply about growth. For Mr Agostino, it was about creating a business capable of enduring beyond any single market cycle.

The challenge was ensuring the values that had shaped the business from the beginning remained intact as the organisation grew.

Leading with family values

For Mr Agostino, leadership begins with people.

He often talks about having two families: the one at home and the one at work. Both are central to how he approaches leadership and decision-making.

As a husband, father and business owner, he believes strong businesses are built on trust, respect and genuine care for the people behind them.

"You want people to feel happy coming into work and know that they're behind you, they're supporting you," he said.

That people-first philosophy has helped shape a workplace culture focused on collaboration, accountability and long-term commitment.

Rather than positioning himself above the business, Mr Agostino prefers to lead alongside his team.

"I think they view me as a peer," he said. "They actually see the work that I'm putting in."

The approach reflects a broader set of values that underpin the business. Trust, integrity, humility and compassion are not aspirational statements on a wall, but principles Mr Agostino says guide decision-making every day.

"If it doesn't align with our values, we simply won't do it," he said.

Giving back when it matters

The philosophy extends beyond the workplace.

Together with his wife Brooke, Mr Agostino helped drive Trendsetter Homes' support of Perth Children's Hospital Foundation (PCHF) and Sandcastles (Boodja Mia), Western Australia's first dedicated children's hospice.

Supporting the initiative was something the couple had wanted to do for some time.

Giving back had always been important to them, but they wanted to wait until the business was in a position where it could make a meaningful contribution.

"When the business got to a position where we could financially give something back, we did," Mr Agostino said.

The couple were particularly drawn to supporting a sensory room within the hospice, a purpose-designed space providing comfort and therapeutic support for children with life-limiting conditions.

As a father, the cause resonated deeply.

"Children don't get an option of the cards they're dealt," he said.

"When we came across the sensory room for the hospice, I remember saying, 'That's it. That's what we need to do'."

Perth Children's Hospital Foundation CEO Carrick Robinson said: "We continue to be inspired by the WA business community, whose willingness to support local, life-changing projects like this ensures families across our state can access the care they need, closer to home.

"It's thanks to Trendsetter Homes' generous contribution that we can deliver a state-of-the-art sensory playroom at Sandcastles. This safe, calming space will give children a place to find comfort, connection and share precious moments with their families.

"Designed to support emotional wellbeing, the sensory playroom will help reduce anxiety and distress while also enabling targeted therapeutic care through combining specialised sensory equipment with soft play features."

For Mr Agostino, community contribution is not separate from business success. It is one of the responsibilities that comes with building a successful business.

Looking ahead, he hopes to build Trendsetter Homes and Select Living into one of Western Australia's top five residential builders by 2030.

But while the goal provides direction, he is more focused on the quality of the journey than the timing of the outcome.

"It'll happen when it happens," he said.

"As long as the values and morals and the service and the process that we've got today doesn't hinder through that period, then I'll be happy."

In an industry often defined by cycles, uncertainty and disruption, Mr Agostino has built his reputation through consistency rather than fanfare.

— From leaving school after Year Nine to becoming one of Western Australia's youngest registered builders, leading a business through the challenges of COVID-19, earning industry recognition, and supporting projects such as Sandcastles, his career reflects a belief that long-term success is built one decision at a time.

It's a philosophy that has helped transform Trendsetter Homes into one of Western Australia's most resilient residential builders and laid the foundations for its next chapter.