

# Becoming the Best

□ Interview with Norm Lum

If you live in the North Shore, you would have probably seen Norm Lum's prominent photographs by a real estate sign on a corner store, bus stop, news stand or a moving bus. I sometimes joke with him about a new place where his face appears or comment on his new designer outfit. To many, Norm Lum is a successful well-dressed realtor with a good looking face, but to his clients and friends, he is a family-oriented, motivated, organized and conscientious individual. The way Norm has pursued and achieved success in his career as a realtor is inspiring. Traditional family values coupled with determination, persistence and motivation have led to his present personal and professional success.

Born in Fiji, Norm grew up helping out in his family's grocery store business. They later moved to Vancouver, Canada where they continue to run a corner grocery store and small nursery business. Norm says, "I would help my parents in the store after school. It was a difficult life, but this has inspired me to become someone different."

He attributes his success to his parents, "Mom and Dad has been the foundation of my life. They have instilled in me the good values of hard work, honesty, treating people with respect and without distinction."

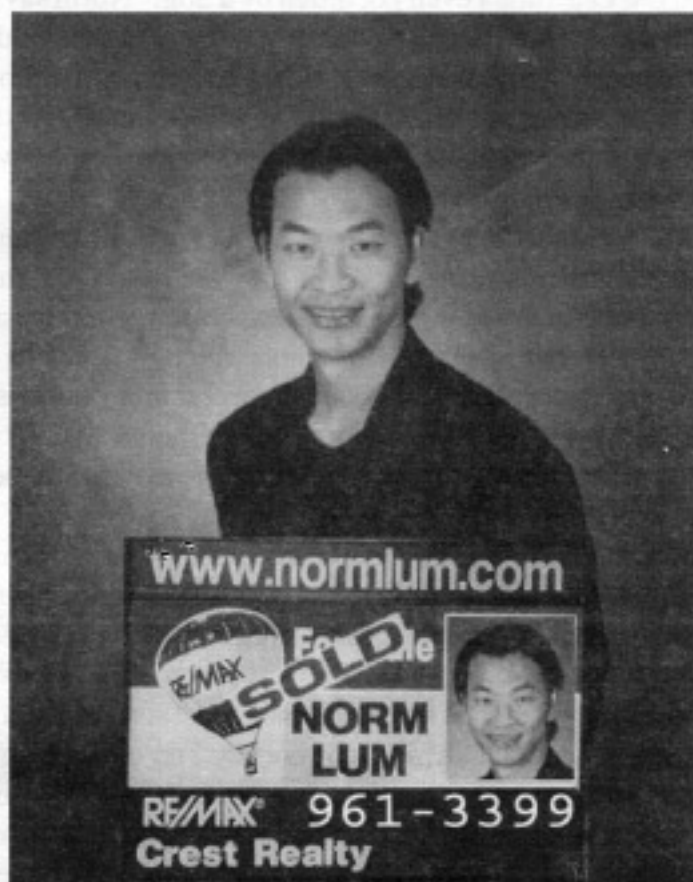
Norm decided on a real estate career when he was in high school. It all started when he noticed an affluent classmate whose father bought him everything he wanted. At that impressionable age, he thought that his classmate's father was doing something right. When he found out that the father was a realtor, Norm asked if he could speak with him and find out the secret of his success. From then on, there was no stopping Norm.

Norm says, "I was lucky to have many good mentors. I did not believe in reinventing the wheel, so I asked a lot of questions." During his last years of high school, he apprenticed at a real estate company, went to open houses and learned as much as he could of the trade. His youthful determination, focus, enthusiasm and eagerness to learn made others want to help him.

Norm says, "One needs to do lots of preparation for success. Luck is in the preparation. Someone might call you to list his house, that's luck, but I have to be prepared to

make that sale a success." One of his secrets to success is setting concrete goals. At the end of the year, Norm takes a two-month break to "clear his head" and maintain balance in his hectic life. After New Year's, he writes down all his goals for the year in a black book. He says he would sit by the computer everyday and read his goals. He would also write down his accomplishments week-by-week of the houses he listed and sold, and the people he met.

When asked to give advice to other realtors-to-be, he says a strategy that works for him is persistence and consistency. "I would set up a program for myself and follow it. The program you design depends on how many houses you want to sell. The more you want to sell, the more you have to do," he says.



Personal Growth

Some new realtors quit after six months or a year because they have not made as many sales as they want. He advises them not to give up as all the work that they do in the past builds up to sales in the future.

"When I first started I would knock on doors. I did this for 300 days rain or shine. I talked to about 100 people a day. One time I even got bitten by a dog!" Norm says. He figures that the more people he talks to, the better his chances of him making a sale. "In my first year as a realtor, a homeowner let me list his home because he thought that if I was assertive enough to knock on doors, I wouldn't have problems selling his home."

Norm believes that client satisfaction is the key and does this by making sure that they are happy, paying attention to details and giving them as much service as possible. Norm says, "One unhappy client leads to a potential loss of clients. About 80 percent of my business comes from past clients. Since realtors should always be looking for future business, more happy clients make it easier to have consistency."

The real estate business is not for everyone as it takes a lot of time and requires some personal sacrifices. "I am lucky to have the best clients so it makes my job enjoyable. Real estate is a way of life for me." Norm adds, "I make sure that I take time to do simple things like visit my family, walk my dog, James, and play hockey. I try to work hard and work smart." When asked about his future goals, he says he will continue to do what he does because he loves his career. He also wants to make sure his parents are taken care of, and of course, get married one day if he finds the right person.

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