

TORONTO CENTRAL EDITION

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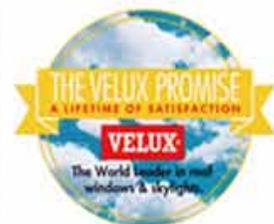
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*Nels Moxness*

PRESIDENT, VELUX CANADA INC.

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# MORE MONEY, MORE TIME ... MORE FUN!

You are succeeding. Your business has grown and provides for you and your family due to your own efforts. Congratulations. But is it enough? Are you being sufficiently rewarded for your labours and for the remarkable risk you have taken? When asked, most entrepreneurs agree that they deserve and that they would like more income from their businesses, more time with their families to enjoy that income and the ability to have some fun along the way.

## **If You Want This, Do You Know How To Get It?...**

According to Warren Coughlin, there are generally a few very common reasons entrepreneurs become stuck or slowed at a certain level of success. These reasons boil down to business owners lacking either the knowledge, vision, motivation or support to do it on their own. Frequently, there is a combination of these factors at play that keeps entrepreneurs and their businesses from reaching their full potential.

Warren would know. He is Canada's top business coach with ActionCOACH and one of the top 10 among the 1000+ Action coaches



in the world. Everyday, he works with entrepreneurs to help them reach new levels of success. And everyday, he witnesses firsthand the things that hold them back from that next plateau. He is so committed to providing value whenever he can, that he insisted this article contain not just information about him, but also valuable knowledge that readers can take away and use.

“I love working with entrepreneurs” says Warren. “It takes so much courage to set out on your own, to commit to controlling your own fate, to risk so much when all around

you others are nestled away in what they perceive as secure environments. That courage deserves to be supported.”

## **If You Are Going To Do It, Then Do It Well...**

It isn't just admiration of courage that has driven Warren to strive to help as many entrepreneurs as he can. He believes that entrepreneurship is critical to the development of our society. He suggests we need only look at our immediate surroundings. The clothes we wear, the electronic equipment we communicate with, the content on web sites, the food we eat, the entertainment we attend, the development of “green” technologies and services; they are all the product of the entrepreneurial spirit, either in their creation or their distribution. Warren points out, “Entrepreneurs create our culture. If that is true, then what you do as an entrepreneur matters. And if it matters, then it matters that you be as successful as possible. My commitment is to help you reach the success you deserve, because when you do, our world becomes a better place.”

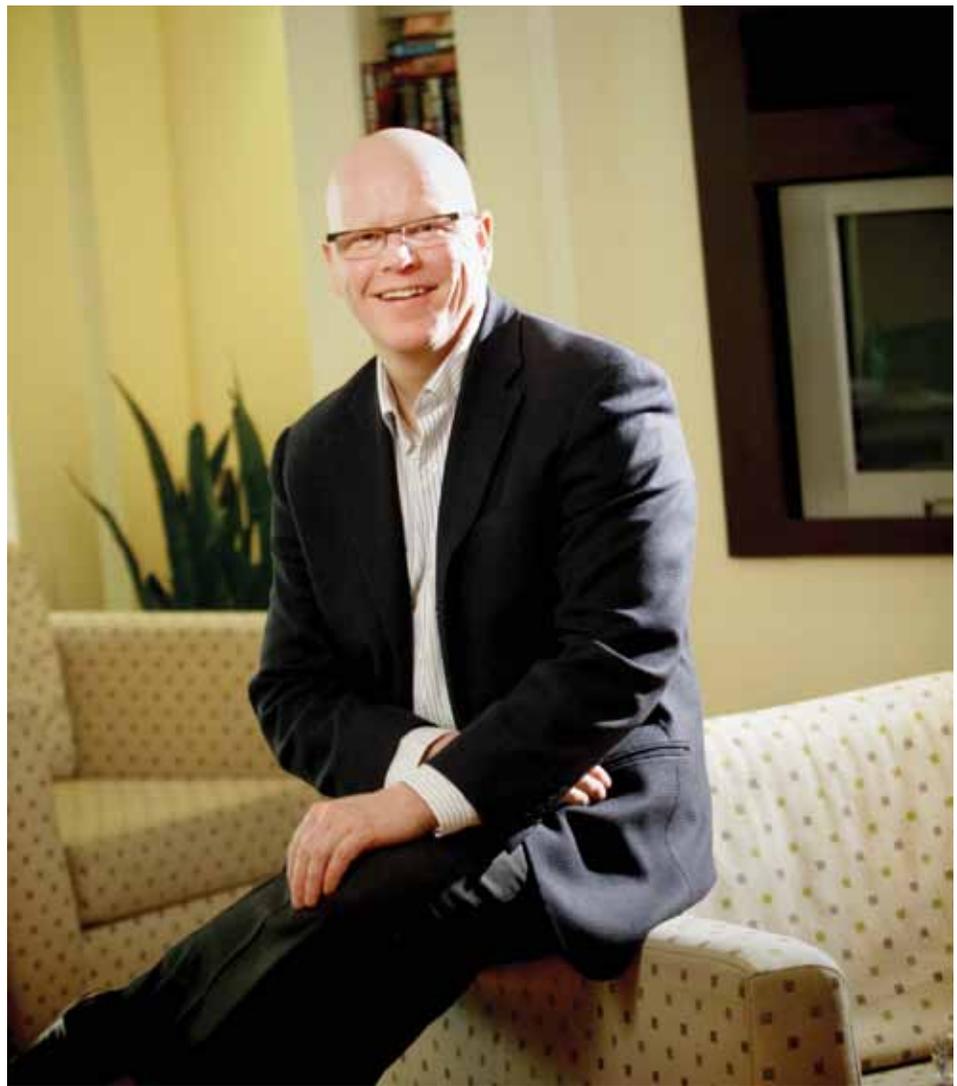
Warren argues passionately that reaching a greater level of success isn't very hard. Look at Olympic level

athletes. You will see that even among the most elite in the world, there are a few who remain at the top. The actual winner may change from race to race, but it is generally always the same 3 or 4 at the front of the pack. Those that never make it to the podium are frequently only a tenth of a second behind or less. Yet the difference in rewards is dramatically different. This difference is something he calls “The Victory Gap.”

### **Bridge the Victory Gap...**

How does this apply to business? It demonstrates that you don't have to be dramatically better than your competition to reap significantly greater rewards. It means that you only have to be a little bit better, but consistently so. Think about it from a customer's perspective. If one business always gets it just a little bit more “right”, who is that customer going to buy from and who will friends be referred to? This is why Warren feels it isn't too difficult. Very few entrepreneurs seek out the ideas, insights or techniques to make them that little bit better.

You are probably wondering at this point how a business becomes that little bit better. Warren again uses an athletic analogy. He compares a sprinter and a marathon runner. They are both runners, but their bodies are very different. A sprinter has quite significant upper body strength. A marathon runner typically does not. The reason? Upper body strength is critical to success in sprinting while it can be a detriment in marathon running. Business is the same. You succeed by focusing on those skills that are critical to success. They are what Warren calls “Critical Victory Factors.”



### **Apply the Critical Victory Factors.**

In entrepreneurial organizations, the Critical Victory Factors include:

- 1) Subject Matter Expertise. This means being excellent at creating or delivering the product or service you offer.
- 2) Success Mindset. Often overlooked, this often makes or breaks a business owner.
- 3) Financial Management. In short, you can't manage what you can't measure.
- 4) Marketing. How do people know you are there?
- 5) Sales. Once they know you are there, what motivates them to buy?
- 6) Team Building. To grow, you

need qualified, trained and motivated team members.

7) Systems/Operations. If you don't want your team making things up everyday, they need systems to follow.

8) Planning. Very few entrepreneurs take the time to plan. Statistically, businesses that engage in this activity vastly outperform those that don't.

9) Time Management. If you do not do this effectively, your success is limited because you end up not focusing on the other Critical Victory Factors.

If you are in business for yourself and you do not have training or education in all of these areas, or people with

training/education in these areas working for you, then your business is not reaching its full potential. While that may, at first, sound a bit distressing, Warren takes a different view. “If you are succeeding without this knowledge or these skills, imagine – just *imagine* - what could be possible if you did apply all of this.”



### **An Easy 61% Profit Increase...**

Warren teaches an approach to developing a business called “The 5 Ways” that is remarkably powerful. True to the concept of The Victory Gap, this approach shows you how to create an unbelievable 61% increase in profitability just by making small increases in 5 different areas of your business. And, again, it isn’t that difficult. Here are just a couple of quick examples. One of Warren’s clients recently enjoyed an increase of 24% in just one of the 5 ways resulting in an increase in profitability of \$260,000. When combined with other steps, this increase will be even higher by year end. Another client experienced a 300% growth in the business over 2.5 years. Warren is adamant that any business owner can enjoy that kind of success.

### **Different Programs for Different Needs...**

Every great performer, whether an athlete or business leader has some kind of coach. Bob Nardelli, the former CEO of Home Depot once

said that people “unless coached, never reach their maximum capabilities.” Warren coaches entrepreneurs to reach their potential through a wide range of programs from 1-1 coaching to group coaching (ActionCLUB) to 90 Day planning sessions (GrowthCLUB) to education and peer to peer coaching groups (ProfitCLUB). It is his skill with these different approaches to coaching that have earned him recognition as Canadian Coach of the Year (‘05), Top Performing Canadian Coach (‘06) and Top 10 Global Coach (‘06).

Continuing his commitment to entrepreneurs, Warren is now introducing something called ActionBOARD. For entrepreneurs who run businesses from \$2-10 million, ActionBOARD is just that. It is a group of entrepreneurs who serve as each other’s board of directors. You meet once per month in a session facilitated by Warren. Like a true board of directors, your colleagues will give you advice, contacts, processes etc while helping you to remain accountable for achieving the success you desire.

### **Have Fun While Learning...**

Take your business to the next level. Warren frequently holds high energy, entertaining and educational seminars and workshops. One attendee said “You’re one of the best speakers I’ve ever had the pleasure of seeing, and you kept everyone engaged through

your creative mix of performance, interactive exercises and incredibly helpful business measurement tools.” If you would like to attend one of these programs to learn more about accelerating your success, or if you just want to meet with Warren personally, email him at [warrencoughlin@actioncoach.com](mailto:warrencoughlin@actioncoach.com) If you mention this article, you will receive a powerful time management teleseminar at no charge. Otherwise, visit [www.profitcoach.ca](http://www.profitcoach.ca) for a free Business Health Check courtesy of Warren. With a great coach, you can be as great as your dreams.

## **Warren Coughlin** **ActionCOACH**

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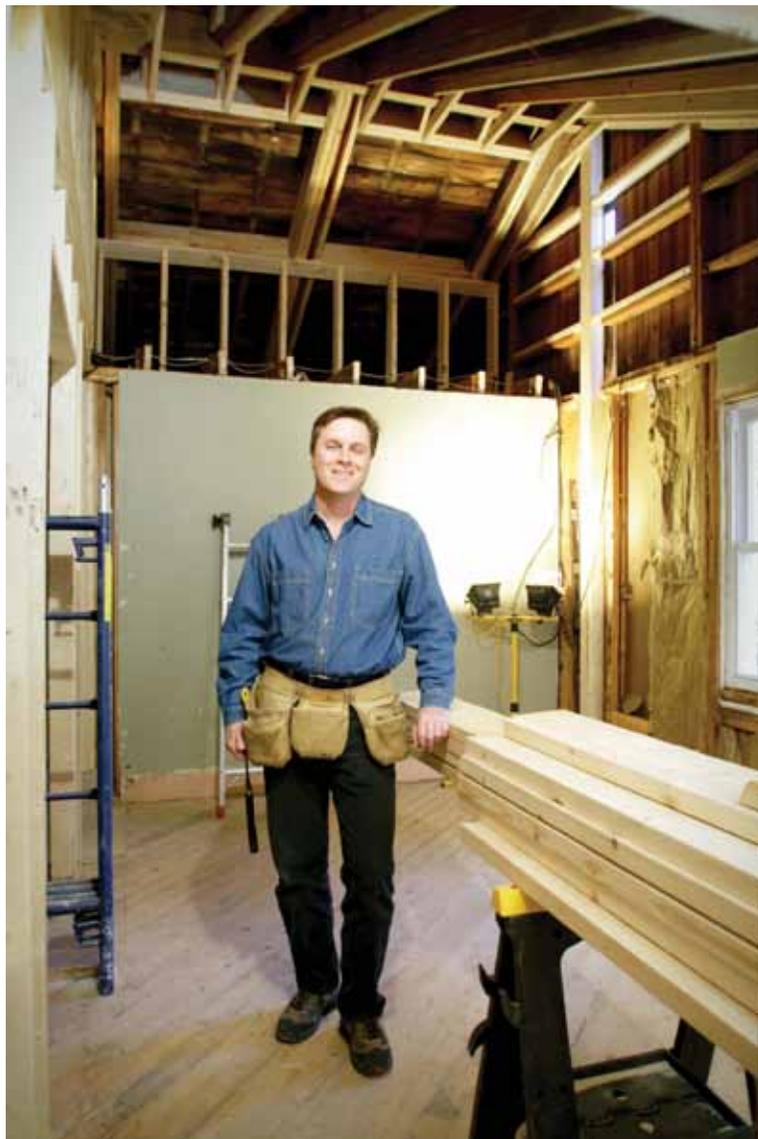
“Be great in act as you are in thought” - Shakespeare.

# MAKING YOU MONEY AND MAKING YOU SHINE

*By Peter Wood*

If you are an Architect, Interior Designer or Residential Contractor, this profile will be of great benefit to you. In providing these kinds of services, you are dedicated to creating beauty and comfort in a residential environment and you are more aware than most that natural light dramatically contributes to this kind of creation. Your challenge is likely finding a partner capable of bringing sunshine into the home reliably, professionally and economically; someone who will make you look good, be easy to work with and will help you make money.

That challenge is what brings a smile to Denis Charron, owner of Skylights Unlimited. His smile comes from knowing - with the certainty that comes from 19 years of experience - that he can easily help you achieve success. As owner of one of Toronto's premier skylight companies, Denis understands the need for cooperative and innovative partnerships. Unlike subcontractors who focus only on the technical side of the work, Denis makes sure his business is also attuned to the experience of the homeowner during the work and to the business needs of the other professionals who have retained or referred him. He understands that you need to communicate accurate information to your client, that work must be done on time, that you need someone



who is both flexible and enjoyable to work with and who comes in on budget.

L.I.G.H.T.™ Up Your Clients' Lives...

How does Denis do this? Simply by making his business work for his clients. Over the past 19 years, Skylights Unlimited has refined its efficient and

effective L.I.G.H.T.™ process, assuring everyone the project will run like clockwork and produce spectacular results. This process was developed by listening to customers and continuously re-examining how things are done. Denis explains "I've always believed that the experience customers have with us is as important as the end product, so we strive to make both truly outstanding".

Denis and his team take the time to learn about your vision for the environment you are creating and assess the structure of the house to determine how they can best contribute to the beautification and to the energy efficiency of the home. They will propose the ideal solution(s) based on your client's needs, budgets, timelines and the structural requirements. You will receive regular communication along the way, so you always know the status of the project. The homeowner will encounter members of the team who are friendly, hardworking and knowledgeable. And when the project is done, the work site will be thoroughly cleaned so the only sign Skylights Unlimited was ever there is the sunshine streaming into the house.

## Keep The Upstairs Cool ...

In addition to the beautification of the home, many modern jobs also have an objective of improving energy efficiency. As mentioned, Skylights Unlimited strives to contribute to the energy efficiency of the home. In addition to the beauty they provide, quality skylights, properly installed, can make a noticeable difference to energy consumption. For instance, did you know that a skylight that opens can increase the efficiency of air conditioning in a 2 or 3 storey home and help ensure that the upstairs is as cool as the main floor during a sweltering heat wave? Helping clients understand how to best use skylights is just one of the additional benefits that Denis provides. "We want to keep finding new ways to use natural lighting and ventilation to create superb living spaces that are energy efficient and that bring the outdoors onto the indoor living experience".

Denis is also fully aware that a subcontractor's ability to handle a project's full scope is always a question. His team is fully trained on both large and small jobs. Because not all subcontractors have the same specialized expertise or commitment to quality as the Skylights Unlimited team, they are often called in to repair or replace skylights others have installed poorly. As a result, Denis' team has developed considerable expertise in swiftly – and permanently - repairing damaged or leaky skylights. Denis jokes that his commitment to no-leak skylight installations borders on the fanatical. "I want people to know that a properly installed skylight is absolutely leak-proof. While I am grateful for the opportunity to help out, it does bother me that so many homes unnecessarily end up requiring repairs."



## Flat Ceiling to Cathedral, and More...

At the other end of the extreme, Denis has a great personal passion for helping convert flat ceilings to cathedral ceilings and assisting with loft conversions. The transformation that occurs by opening up the ceiling and drawing in maximum sunshine through appropriately placed skylights are frequently nothing short of jaw dropping. It is often the case that, when strategically placed, the skylights allow natural light to reach even the basement. In all such jobs, Denis and his team handle the whole transformation from design to consulting on skylight selection and placement through to installation and clean up. This provides you the comfort that your project will be completed on time and you will generate the margins on the work you deserve.

## A Great Homeowner Experience...

In addition to the superb work that naturally comes from a clear specialization and years of experience, Skylights Unlimited is also committed to outstanding customer experiences for both the professional hiring them and the homeowner who is having the work done. All business owners understand that repeats and referrals are terrific and

cost-effective ways of growing a business. Moreover, most of us know that repeats and referrals come from providing experiences that go beyond expectations. Recognizing this, Denis makes sure that his team does its part to help you receive those repeats and referrals. Displaying what he calls his "keen sense of the obvious", Denis points out that "if those that retain or refer me end up receiving more work, in part, because of what our guys have done, then I think it is likely we will receive more work. So, the way I see it, the happier we make the homeowner, the more everyone wins." The Skylights Unlimited team does this in a few ways.

1) Before anyone ever shows up at a home, Denis wants to ensure the homeowners are totally comfortable. Given the times we live in, many homeowners are not fully comfortable having unknown burly men showing up at the door when only the wife or the nanny are home alone. So Denis sends an email with photographs and bios of the guys who will be showing up so that the person at home knows who to expect at the door.

2) The guys are clean, uniformed and trained to be consistently friendly and accommodating to the homeowners. Their vehicles are also clean and well maintained

so that no one need feel embarrassed by the van or truck parked in the driveway.

3) Each crew is provided a digital camera or camera phone. In the case of repairs and replacements, one of the guys will take pictures of the roof around the skylight and show it to the homeowner. Again, it is unfortunate, but the reality is many people do not fully trust that trades are recommending only what is necessary. Denis has always been of the view that integrity matters more than profits and wants his customers to be able to trust him fully. By showing the homeowner the state of the roof around the skylight, the homeowner knows the work being recommended is, in fact necessary.

4) Denis is the only skylight company in Toronto that he knows of to provide a solid 6 point guarantee covering product warranty, workmanship, pricing, timing and more. The details on this guarantee and samples of some of the truly remarkable work that Skylights Unlimited has done can be found at [www.skylightsunlimited.ca](http://www.skylightsunlimited.ca)

They'll Make You Look Good...

Because Denis would love to help you shine to your customers, he is offering a free suntunnel, (which can bring natural light to places a skylight cannot reach) on the first job that you introduce to him.

While the tagline for his company is "We Sell Sunshine", it is clear that Denis provides a lot more. He provides skill, experience, understanding of the business needs of his partners and homeowners as well as the comfort that comes from knowing a job will be done right. In short, he will make you money and make you shine.

THIS IS NOT ON THE DRAFT ANY LONGER :

"It's a fairly simple formula", he says, "Offer a good product and service, have good people working with you and build your company's foundation on a high level of integrity. I've learned that integrity is more valuable than profits and that good

people in your organization make all the difference."

When looking over our notes from the interviews we did with Dennis, the word 'integrity' is always front and centre and within that definition is his insistence on professionalism and customer satisfaction, and it has been that way since he started in 1988.

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Photography by Dave Biese

# A Soul with a Heart



Vincent Sinnadurai has earned the respect of his community and others in Canada. He has won the hearts and minds of many, particularly Tamil Canadians, as a man of great human compassion. His commitment to help Tamils, in Canada and in his Home in Sri Lanka, is only matched by his thirst for excellence in his undertakings.

What propels him to the pinnacle of honour?

Vincent is a practical man. He totally understands that his success

in life rests on the well-being of the members of his community.

Owning a house is the highest dream of every Canadian. Affording a home is the single most ambition of any individual. Those individuals of his community who dream of owning a house are his life-wire. Vincent is committed to making certain that those individuals who are looking for a mortgage don't have to look past him or beyond him.

Vincent Sinnadurai, a Senior Account Manager (Residential

Mortgages) at Royal Bank of Canada, operates from his modest office in Scarborough, at Unit 3, 2250 Midland Avenue. He himself is modest. He is so modest that his office belies any testimony to his affluence.

There are galaxies of mortgage specialists. But, Vincent is head and shoulders above the rest.

Vincent's boss Khushroo Mistry, Regional Sales Manger (RBC) would tell you that Vince is the best of the crop. Vincent's strength is his competitive spirit.

“He hates being beaten!” observes Khushroo.

Vincent’s attitude and temperament is well suited for his field. He is friendly, approachable, and amenable. You are looking at long hours of work; - often well into the late evenings and weekends. Yet, he fulfils his social obligations with no loss of integrity to his commitment to serve his clients, at their call.

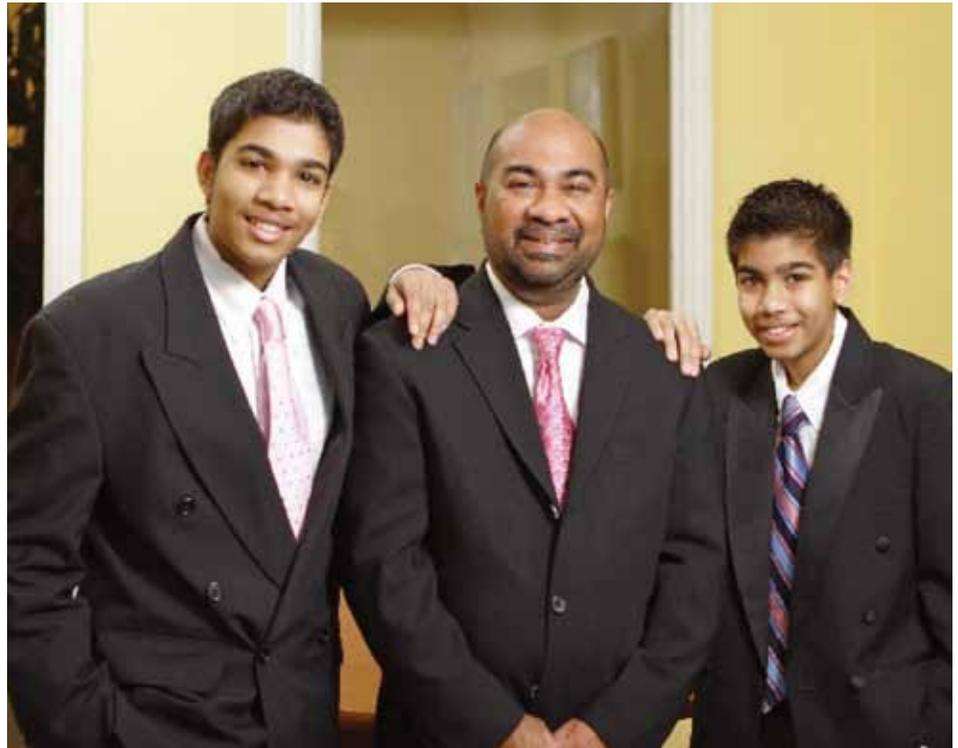
He works tirelessly and patiently to satisfy the dreams of home buyers. Vincent makes sure that his clients end up with a home within their means, - a home that has the best value, at the best rate, in the housing market that is quite competitive. No wonder home buyers flock to him. Royal Bank is the better for it.

Vincent attributes his commitment to superior service as his insurance for his march to prosperity.

Any motivational speaker would tell you that it is passion that fuels one’s rise to stardom. Vincent lives and breathes passion.

Jessie - Vincent’s mother - says that Vincent always wanted to be a Banker. From the tender age of nine, - remember, he was still in Sri Lanka then -, Vincent had made up his mind to be a Banker. And today, he is.

Vincent doesn’t do anything different from what you or others do. But, he does it differently; he does it better. He makes a difference. It is his burning desire to be the best in his field of choice that has taken him to the top.



Vincent set foot in Canada with no pretensions whatsoever. His goals and ambitions were the same as that of every new immigrant, - to build a better life for himself and for his family.

Vincent remembers his early days, well.

Jessie, a single mother from Sri Lanka, faced with uncertain and unkind political clouds gathering in the country, moved from tumultuous Colombo to tranquil Jaffna, to ensure that young Vince received uninterrupted and quality education, the richness of which only Tamils know best!

The tribulations of Vincent as a child gave him the opportunity to grasp the harsh realities of life early. He learnt it quick. He learnt it well. He recognized that there is no fulfillment in life unless you reach for the top.

Vincent knows how to overcome

barriers and drawbacks. His small build could not stop him from excelling in sports, at school. You have to lead the pack for you to win the race! He took it as his mantra. Today, he is one of the best mortgage specialist Royal Bank knows of.

Vincent is quick to acknowledge that Julie Snell (Senior Manager, Special Projects, at Royal Bank) was the first to identify his talents in Banking. She encouraged him to ‘reach for the stars!’ Julie made sure that Vincent was recognized for his services with a Cruise, an award at Royal bank, for excellence. Nowadays, Cruises just keep coming!

Thambipillai Puvananathan, a past President of The Tamil Eelam Society Of Canada, a not-for-profit organization assisting new immigrants to settle down and integrate into the Canadian mainstream, will tell you of the many prolific contributions of Vincent to The Society. His financial assistance

month after month helps to keep the services of The Society flowing.

Thambipillai says that the Tamil community constantly looks up to Vincent for assistance. He adds that Vincent does not know how to say 'no' to people approaching him for help. Whether it is Sports, Cultural activities, School fundraising or any other charitable cause, those who seek his help are never turned away.

Vincent's charity stands him in good stead. It offers him a network of potential clients. You may want to ask, if that's how he reaps the returns of his benevolence? No. It is the other way around. The donation, to charitable organizations, is Vincent's way of sharing his fortunes with others.

Vincent looks at success in a different light. Success is not what others bring for you; it is what you create for yourself. Like charity, success too begins at home!

Vincent considers his family and friends as valuable assets of inspiration.

Baheerathy, Vincent's wife, is an elegant example of a woman behind a man's success. Ahilan Mylvaganam, his longstanding friend, from his schooldays in Jaffna, and another Senior account Manager at Royal Bank, is a pillar of support and encouragement in Vincent's quest for excellence. A happy and united family also adds to success, Vincent says.

What my mother taught me is exactly what my wife and I are teaching our kids, - sons, Suban (14) and Harrish (13). They receive the highest attention, particularly from their mother Baheerathy who has given up her own career in banking, just to be a full time mother to them.

Vincent's children are learning the

very same skills, - working hard and playing hard. In addition to their academic pursuits and Music, they are encouraged to learn the hard knocks of life, through Sports.

Vincent who played the game of Cricket in Sri Lanka muses, "It's a pity that not many in Canada show interest in Cricket". Cricket, for Vincent, is still synonymous with fair play, sportsmanship and determination. It takes courage and concentration to protect your stumps in the broiling sun, when the wickets keep tumbling at the other end.

No wonder, Vincent lends support to Soccer and Cricket clubs in Canada.

Your wife, your children, and your friends can encourage you and support you. But, at the end it is you who have to work for your own success.

What is the secret behind Vincent's success?

Vincent answers that for you with his trade-mark smile.

"Stay focused. Climb one rung at a time. The top of the ladder will be waiting for you!"



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# Let's Barter!

By: Peter Wood



**W**e all like to get a good deal when we do business. Everything from a chocolate bar right up to a new home, it all feels better in the pocketbook when we think we've gotten a good deal. Now, take that feeling and get your mind around the concept that something you might have someone else would like to have and they have something you want as well... As children we did this all the time with other children... wouldn't it be nice to be able to do that again?

Well the good news is you can, and the way to do it is not so far removed from the 'trades' we did in the schoolyard... only now the stuff's a lot neater!

International Trade Exchange, ITEX, began in Portland, Oregon in 1982 as a small business barter exchange service. Growth progressed throughout the US in the 80's and 90's, and then starting in Canada in 1998. In August of 2005, ITEX announced the acquisition of BXI, the second largest trade exchange in North America. The move added more than 11,000 member businesses to the ITEX Marketplace. ITEX in Canada has over 3,000 member businesses and 23,000 overall in North America. ITEX began 2007 celebrating their 25th Anniversary in business. ITEX Toronto is the #3 office out of 95 Licensed Franchisees and Brokerages in

North America in transaction volume and #2 in New Member Enrollment in Canada. There are offices in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver and then throughout the U.S. including New York, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles and San Francisco and more. ITEX Corporation, Head Office, is located in Bellevue, Washington, a suburb of Seattle.

After 25 years in business ITEX has developed into the number one barter exchange in North America with industry leading practices, software and expertise. "Powered by ITEX" (PBI) is

the state-of-the-art software developed in house and utilized by ITEX Brokers and Members alike to conduct ITEX-related activity. Transferring ITEX dollars between members, tracking account activity, member interests and spending patterns, Broker Staff and member communication, The ITEX Marketplace, ITEX Member Directory and more are all part of PBI. ITEX has had promotional partnerships with other industry leaders such as Starbucks, Exxon Mobil, EBay and Dell Computers, our newest partner is Expedia! These types of relationships have helped propel ITEX Corporation to the top of their industry, while increasing brand awareness and consumer knowledge.

ITEX is the only barter company in North America that has the ITEX Co-op Advertising Program! This program allows members to take advantage of an available \$10,000 in ITEX dollars to be credited back to their ITEX account when they include the ITEX logo in their business' advertising. The Co-op program was created to support ITEX members that are small businesses. ITEX members can be reimbursed for 50% (\$10K) of their up to \$20,000 annually total advertising costs when they use the ITEX Co-op Advertising program!

ITEX Toronto is independently owned by Michael Muzzin, an ITEX Licensed Broker. Michael began as a Sales Consultant in 2001 with ITEX Corporation and quickly became New Member Enrollment Sales Manager. In 2003 he became ITEX's newest Canadian broker. He has been making

fantastic progress in growing his office and is an ITEX Master of Sales Award Recipient. By 2005 Michael had bought the ITEX Toronto Brokerage from John Castoro, his former Manager. Michael currently sits on the ITEX Brokers Ethics Committee and has spoken to small business owners and entrepreneurs in the Toronto area about the merits of



barter in the business world today and how it's benefits make a program like ITEX such a powerful business tool.

Michael is the President of Creative Trade Source Inc., and with his team continue to dedicate their time and effort to constant growth of ITEX Toronto, both in New Client Enrollment and Trading between clients. Michael has been published in various consumer and business

publications on the subject of barter, and is also a regular speaker on barter and trade and can be routinely found at networking events and University lecture halls.

One of Michael's ongoing movements is for the continued exposure and promotion of barter as the essential tool for almost any business in today's society. As Mike will tell you, "We bring customers and sales to our clients that other businesses don't get! We save our clients money by trading for a product instead of paying for it off their bottom line. I started at ITEX for one reason, to bring value and assistance to almost any business in the marketplace today. Our staff of professionals are a dedicated, high-performing team with great chemistry and professionalism that's evident in all that we do. ITEX Corporation has an incomparable level of service, value-added programs and number of members, which is more than double it's closest competitor. ITEX processes over \$300 million dollars in transactions annually throughout its more than 23,000 member businesses." As impressive as this sounds, Mike also insists we recognize the use of teamwork to grow a successful business venture. "A team is only

as good as the players who are on it, ITEX Toronto, is not a good team, it's a great team. Working as a team makes everyone accountable and we encourage each other to do and be our best. Working on our own doesn't provide us with the same level of drive or performance, likely because there is less of a presence or emphasis in those key areas. A team atmosphere makes us all better for it and by doing so, positively affects our

clients making the ITEX experience better, whether a team member or customer.

“As I continue to create my own path and vision for ITEX Toronto, I have met some amazing people. ITEX has many wonderful business owners, entrepreneurs and visionaries as members and they make an impact on me and the success of my ITEX Brokerage. We understand and realize that the success and growth of ITEX in Toronto as the leading barter company is based solely on members who actively participate in the ITEX program itself. It’s that kind of understanding that will continue to keep us at the top in our industry in Toronto and across North America.”

When it comes to promoting his team and the ITEX brand, Mike is also on the cutting edge in his use of new technologies. “ITEX Toronto utilizes various types of advertising and marketing to grow the ITEX brand and find prospect’s for new members in the Toronto and surrounding area. Television, Print, Radio, Direct Mail, Trade Shows and Search Engine Optimization are all areas of advertising where ITEX has presence.”

As well, just announced is the new Executive Privileges Program in tandem with an improved ITEX.com website. This program is designed to enhance the value proposition for existing and potential new members of the ITEX network by providing a series of benefits, (payroll, travel,



recruiting and more to be announced) which enhance the profitability of its members. As Mike is proud to point out, “These services will complement, not substitute, the services that ITEX members offer to each other today. ITEX will partner with some of the leading brands in industry to provide discounts, personalized service and added value.”

This commitment to getting the brand known allows Mike and his team to take part in philanthropic endeavors as well. As a proud member of the Toronto Board Of Trade, he commits his time and resources to help out the most vulnerable in our community. “During the Holiday season in 2006 ITEX Toronto created the first ever online ITEX auction where members submitted products and services and put them up for bid for ITEX dollars. ITEX members bid on the items available and portions of the proceeds went to ‘Reach for the Rainbow’, a local charity in Toronto benefiting physically and mentally challenged youth. The event was so successful ITEX Toronto Management has decided a similar event will take place this coming spring.”

With all this activity going on at ITEX, Michael still enjoys playing hockey, baseball, and poker. Michael’s nickname is “The Machine” it was given to him by the ITEX Corporation for his consistent and constant sales performance. Understanding that you must find a balance has been another trait of this business dynamo,

and it means that his team also stays properly focused. For all this young man has done, there is still a fair amount of leg pulling and admiration for his talents. Corporate headquarters once joked that Michael’s office furniture is in ITEX colours. It is also rumoured to be true that Michael plans to name his first-born son “Barter”. When asked if this was true, Mike smiles and states, “I would bet that I know who said that, but I’d rather deal...” Funnily enough, out came a deck of cards....

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# The Far East Is As Close As Your Heart.

*By: Peter Wood*



When you think about determined people all you need to do is to be introduced to Nelly Gong, of State Farm Insurance, and you'll have the perfect example! Ask Nelly what makes her successful and it is a simple axiom, "Serve with your heart!"

Nelly's drive and determination to serve and give back to her community and the Canadian landscape speak volumes about this powerhouse whose infectious smile and ready wit capture a room as well as your heart which you might find surprising for the hard-nosed portrait people often

paint of the insurance business. To Nelly the term "insurance" has a positive meaning that is reflected in her love of the industry and the good work it can accomplish. It is that drive, and a certain 'crash' that led Nelly to think about a change in careers. "We were driving in the U.S. when we were involved in an accident. The other driver was insured with State Farm and we were immediately given a cheque by State Farm to settle the claim. That service impressed me so much that I had to find out more about this insurance

company." She goes on to relate, "I was self-employed before I bought our house in Mississauga mainly handling my recruiting business between Canada, US, and China. After I moved to Mississauga, I wanted to find a 9 to 5 job so I could spend more time with my husband and children; instead of running around all over the place dealing with the vast time differences with my clients in three countries. Later when I went looking for insurance I found that there were no Mandarin-speaking general insurance agents or



brokers in Mississauga. Then I met some State Farm representatives at a local event. From there, I knew what I had to do.”

Nelly opened up her agency on August 1st, 2002 after six months intensive training at the State Farm Canadian Head Office. Her classmates during the training were all from State Farm agents’ offices. She faced the challenge of catching up with her classmates during the training, and learning the insurance and financial service business. With her strong academic background, she started her new career with confidence and the impressive support from State Farm’s head office that saw a need for someone to serve the burgeoning Asian community in Mississauga. At the time her agency opened, the traditional State Farm Fall Promotion was in high gear, so to prove that State Farm had made

the right move by thinking outside the corporate box, she ranked in the top ten agents amongst more than 450 agents Canada-wide. From this lofty position Nelly began her work of giving back to the community that embraced her by becoming involved in the Chinese Community and local charities. She was the Chair and consultant for the Mississauga Mandarin Association. As if this was not enough, Nelly became a Board Member at the United Way Peel Region, and currently, she leads the Chinese Community Advisory Council at the United Way Peel Region. Nelly Yanwen Gong is also a member at both Mississauga Board of Trade and the Mississauga Board of Chinese Professionals & Businesses. Nelly is quick to add; that it is not just she... it is the remarkable team she has brought together through shrewd judgment and sometimes luck! “We have a lot of fun working together as

a team. They share my success and I benefit from their hard dedicated work. I support them in their work and listen to them when they need someone to be there in their personal life too. I treat them like family and they always reciprocate. It is never ‘boss to employee’ it is a partnership of people with a like-mind for the client and the business.

“My team members do the day-to-day business. I concentrate on the business management issues, but I am always there to help my team. They write up the new businesses, take care of the claims, and handle many of the services”, she says with a smile. “Whatever they need me to do, such as changing the water in our fish tank, fixing up their manuals, or following up with our customers. As a team we all succeed and successful people can

give back easily to the community and watch as their dreams come true.” Also, what sets Nelly (a lady with two Masters Degrees in science) and her team apart, are such things as one-stop shopping for insurance and financial services needs. Educating and servicing their customers with respect is important in Nelly’s Office. This is why, under Nelly’s direction over 90% of their business is from referrals. Nelly has a great relationship with her team members who are very proficient in their work. Nelly has an open-door policy with her team. She

states, “I didn’t know this until one of my staff jokingly said that my door was always open... why not remove it from the hinges?” Perhaps this is why Nelly’s hard work has been recognized not only by the community, but by State Farm as well. In 2002 she garnered a place as one of the Top Ten Canadian Agents, and then in 2004-2006, she was recognized with the annual Life Ambassador Award. Never resting on her laurels you can rest assured that Nelly has set even higher goals for herself. When asked what they might be, she’ll speak of

building up with other professionals who share her philosophy of caring for and serving their clients.

Part of this infectious spirit also comes from Nelly’s parents who were both esteemed teachers back in China. She speaks with pride and awe how people years later would come up to them in the streets to thank them for the difference they had made in their lives. “When I saw this over and over again, one cannot help but be drawn to that same level of commitment and service; no matter what profession you choose.” Nelly’s philosophy for success has four cornerstones and when asked she shares these four items to anyone interested in a professional career. They are: Excellent leadership with a caring and supportive team; Hard work; Being recognized in your community, showing dignity in all situations.

When all is said and done Nelly’s success finds its roots deep in her commitment to family and community. Her final remark may be the most telling about this professional mother of three, “Learning is a life-long process. Educating the clients is our obligation. All of these have to come from the heart.



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