

A RESOURCE FOR BUSINESSES



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# SAMUEL MIELE

## CELEBRATING SMALL BUSINESSES

P06. No Longer a "Wandering Spirit"

P11. Lucy Maud Montgomery

P13. Ruby Luo

P30. Reshaping the Workplace after COVID-19

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# PUBLISHER'S NOTE

April



BUSINESS LINK  
MEDIA GROUP

Dear Business Link Readers,

First of all I would like to thank all contributors and everyone who helped make our March issue with articles around Women's International month. The people say; "That behind every successful man; there is a woman, lady; mother; entrepreneur, aunt; cousin; friend, colleague, partner; well you get the idea."

In this issue, we want to recognize and celebrate small businesses and why we believe they are absolutely essential. With the emergence of spring, alongside the lifting of COVID mandates and restrictions, we celebrate the resurgence of new life, new beginnings and new opportunities that supporting the small businesses community can bring.

There's no question that the past two years have been tough on the small business community. With the ever-morphing shift in provincial regulations, our local coffee shops, restaurants and other product & service based businesses deemed "non-essential" have been faced with lockdowns, mandate restrictions, supply and staffing shortages, all the while dealing with the enormity of their own stresses surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Small businesses provide opportunities for entrepreneurs, jobs for our neighbours and gathering places for communities. They're rooted in the landscape where they grow and give back vitality and sustenance to our local economy.

Independently owned restaurants and shops reflect the culture and needs of their local neighbourhoods. They help to foster financial interdependence and broad-based prosperity. When you spend money at a privately owned local store, that money goes directly towards paying a worker in your neighbourhood. The more that small businesses leverage their potential to support each other, the greater their capacity to create a thriving local economy.

Yours in business,

Marilyn Tian, M.B.A.  
President & Co-Publisher  
Business Link Media Group

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YOUR SELF-TUNE UP

NO LONGER A

# “WANDERING SPIRIT”

BY SHERI HAWKINS

HOW  
COFFEEHOUSE  
OWNER  
GREGOR SAYLISS  
FOUND COMMUNITY  
IN DOWNTOWN  
ST. CATHARINES

*“I feel truly grateful to be a contributing part of the downtown St. Catharines community and I look forward to growing my business here for years to come.”*

- GREGOR SAYLISS





There is no question that the past two years have been extremely difficult for the Niagara small business community. With the ever-shifting provincial regulations, our local product & service-based businesses have been faced with lockdowns, mandate restrictions, supply and staffing shortages, all the while dealing with the weight of their own mental stress surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

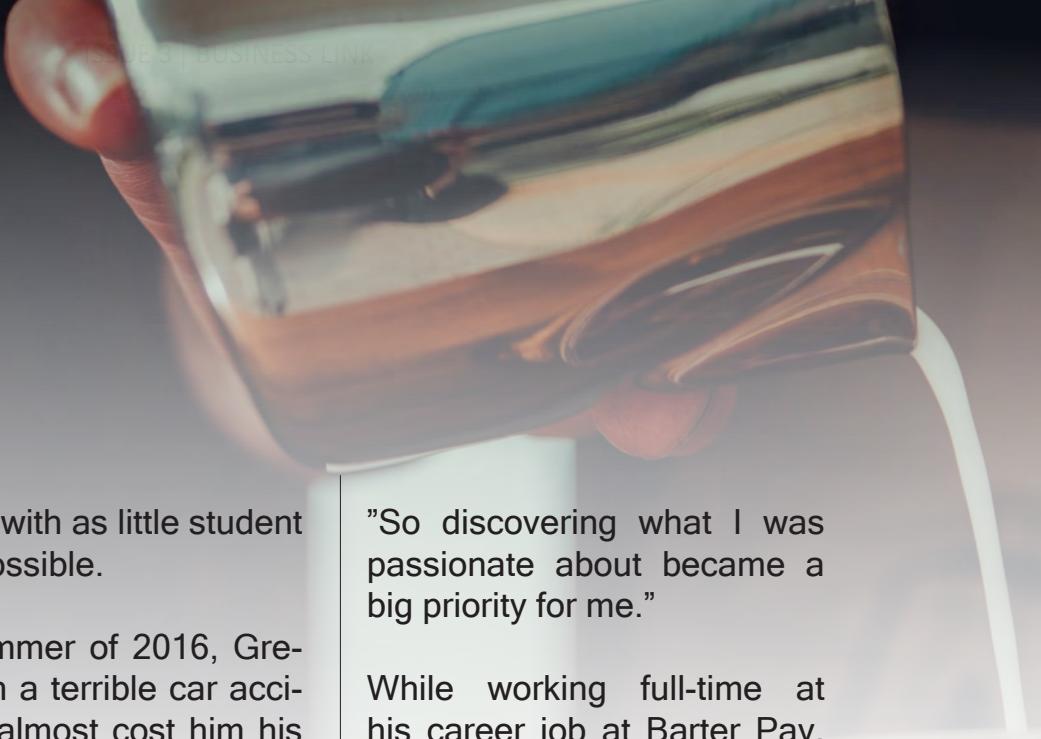
A study in early 2021 noted that loneliness and feelings of isolation were the biggest



contributing factors to the psychological impact of COVID-19. But for local business owner Gregor Sayliss, the past two years have given him a unique opportunity to connect with the downtown St. Catharines community.

Born and raised in St. Catharines, Gregor attended Sir Winston Churchill High School and acquired his university education at Brock. After studying Kinesiology for just over a year, Gregor quickly recognized that, as much as he enjoyed sports, he wasn't interested in learning about human anatomy, so he transitioned to complete his degree in Business Administration.

Gregor worked in the hospitality industry while attending university, both as a bartender at The Feathery Pub and as a Starbucks barista. He always had two jobs and was willing to work long days and late nights in order to get through



university with as little student debt as possible.

In the summer of 2016, Gregor was in a terrible car accident that almost cost him his life. The years of maintaining a rigorous work schedule took its toll and he fell asleep behind the wheel of his vehicle while driving on the highway. He plummeted into a ditch, causing his vehicle to flip multiple times in the air, over the distance of 200 meters. Fortunately, he survived the crash with only a broken arm and some minor lacerations and bruising.

Determined to learn from his near-death experience, Gregor initially thought the lesson was to slow down and enjoy life at a slower pace. However, he quickly realized that, for him, his joy was found, not in working less, but in finding a profession that he loved to do.

"Facing my own mortality taught me that the ultimate goal was to enjoy life doing what I loved." Gregor says.

"So discovering what I was passionate about became a big priority for me."

While working full-time at his career job at Barter Pay, Gregor started his business "Wandering Spirits", a mobile bartending service. Initially it was just a side gig for him, but by August 2020, with so many people transitioning to small, outdoor weddings resulting from the pandemic restrictions, Gregor had become busy enough to make a full-time income from it. As a result, he decided to quit his job at Barter Pay and devote himself to growing his business.

Having a deep-rooted understanding of the hospitality industry, Gregor also saw a market for selling coffee. So, he added espresso onto his menu, which eventually led to him transitioning from a bartending service to a mobile espresso bar. He stayed busy booking corporate and private events, while also collaborating with places like Collective Arts Brewing in Hamilton.



In October 2020, Gregor partnered with local business Bushel & Peck and parked his small trailer in the lot in front of their store. On October 31st, with just a tiny space heater to keep him warm, Gregor opened his window to serve a 2-hour long line-up of people, waiting to be treated to a cup of his delicious, locally roasted coffee.

During the winter and spring of 2021, Gregor established a loyal customer base, with people regularly thanking him for “being there” as it gave them a destination and an opportunity to interact with the community.

Says Gregor, “Oftentimes my customers would say to me, ‘Walking down to grab a cup of coffee from you is the one thing I can do every day to get out of the house.’ Hearing that meant something to me, to be able to provide an opportunity for people to connect at a time when we really needed each other.”

By summer 2021, Gregor felt ready to transition into a brick & mortar shop, and he found the perfect location: a micro commercial unit at the corner of Russell Ave and Wolseley in St. Catharines. It was a short one kilometer’s walking distance from Bushel & Peck, with forty of

his regular customers living in the nearby residential area. So, he readily signed the lease on the building, with plans to open in the fall of 2021.

However, due to the construction delays and delivery issues within the supply chain, the timeline for his renovation projects continually got pushed back so he decided to put his plans temporarily on hold until the Russell location was up and running. At the same time, he found his current location at 31 James Street, when he reached out to the owner of Living Apothecary, Kara Petrunick, and learned that they wanted to hire an independent contractor to run the front space of their coffee shop that was move-in ready.

In February 2022, Gregor opened the doors to “Wandering Spirits” first brick and mortar location and has never looked back.

Want to learn more?

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Web: <http://wanderingspiritscoffee.com>

"I feel so fortunate to be a part of the business community in downtown St. Catharines", Gregor states emphatically. "We're so supportive of each other down here, everyone just wants everyone else to succeed. Even the other coffee shops owners, that some would consider my competition, are so helpful with sharing their knowledge and resources."

Gregor demonstrates his strong belief in the importance of supporting local businesses by creating partnerships with local bakeries, such as Artesano Bakery and the Sugar & Butter Baking Co. He also plans to obtain a liquor license so he can sell locally crafted spirits and alcoholic beverages, as well as partner with a local commercial kitchen to make his signature cold brew and popular coffee syrups (which quickly sold out when he started bottling them last year).

As a huge advocate of environmental responsibility, Gregor hopes to

use only fully biodegradable cups and lids. "There are so few manufacturers making compostable coffee cups that they're always out of supplies," Gregor states, "I need to stock up and get a year's supply in one purchase."

Another item on Gregor's checklist of goals is to transition his coffee shop to being living wage certified, which he plans to do once he gets his payroll fully set up and can employ some full-time help.

"It's very important to me to empower my employees by giving them an opportunity to earn a fair wage," he asserts. "I want them to be happy to come into work, knowing that they'll be treated with kindness, dignity and respect."

As for his location on Russell Ave., he still plans to open there as a secondary location, which he will do as soon as the renovations are complete.

Gregor concludes, "I feel truly grateful to be a contributing part of the downtown St. Catharines community and I look forward to growing my business here for years to come." BL.



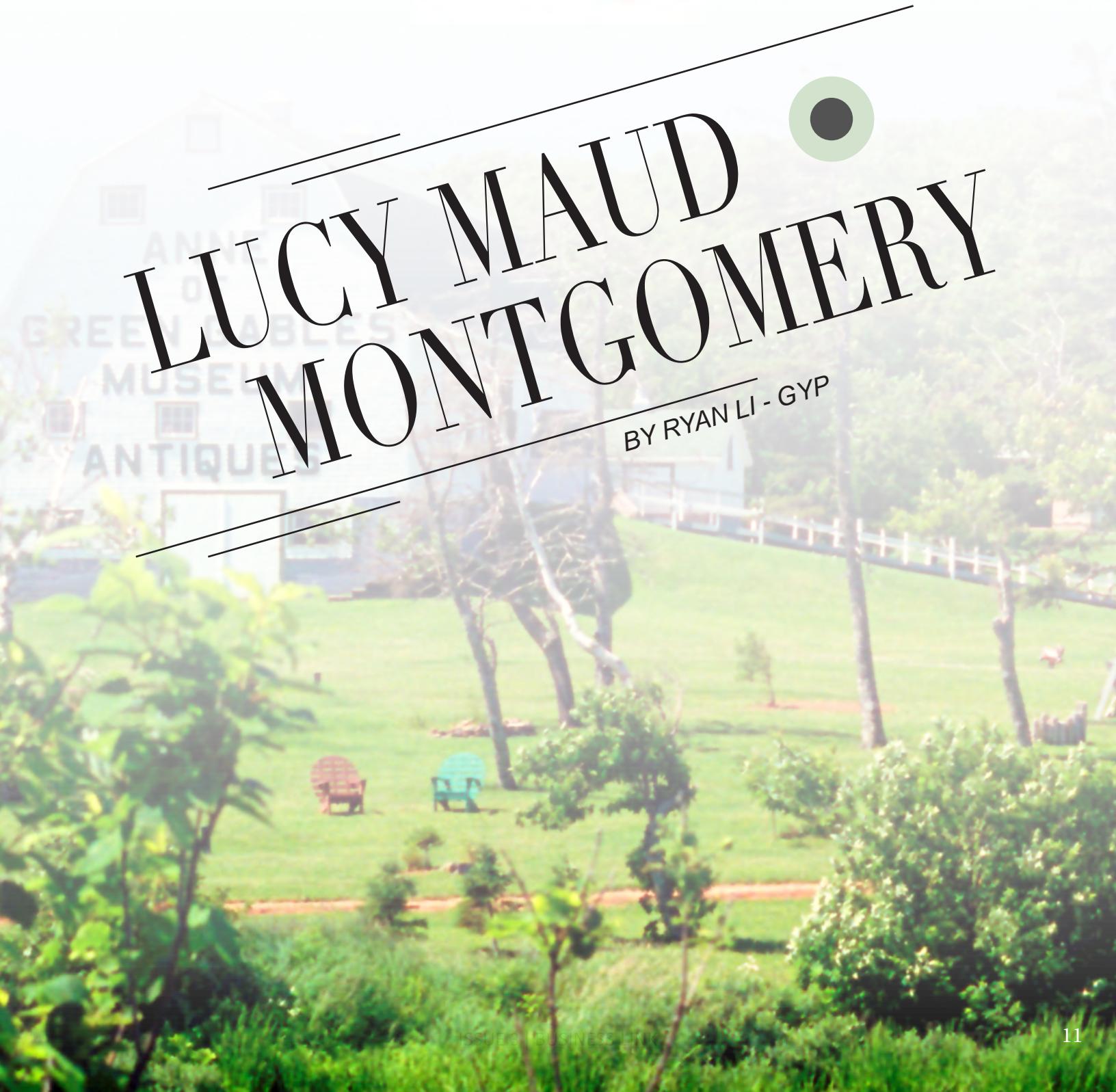

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*This article was written by Sheri Hawkins. Sheri is currently the Chief Editor of Business Link Media digital magazine and the operator of the community platform, Mainly Niagara.*



# LUCY MAUD MONTGOMERY

BY RYAN LI - GYP





*GYP is committed to building a public welfare innovation platform for young people worldwide. We print submissions from aspiring GYP writers! GYP is also the strategic partner of BLMG.*

**L**ucy Maud Montgomery was born in 1874 to a wealthy PEI family. When she was only a year old, Montgomery's mother died, and she was sent to go live with her grandparents. After a quick stint at teaching, Montgomery quit the profession in order to free up more time for her real passion for writing. In 1908, she published the now-famous book "Anne of Green Gables", which instantly became a hit. A few years later, Montgomery began getting involved in social causes such as women's suffrage and continued to write books and poems. Unfortunately, the death of a close friend and her newborn son caused Montgomery to start battling depression. Nevertheless, Montgomery still persevered and kept writing books. She eventually resettled in Toronto to live closer to her children. It was there where she was awarded the Order of the British Empire, named a National Historic Person, and became the first Canadian woman to be made a member of the British Royal Society of Arts, paving the way for many more women to join her in the future.

Lucy Maud Montgomery was significant for three main reasons. Firstly, she had to battle for everything as a woman in a very patriarchal society and had to over-

come adversity in order to be able to publish her works in the first place. As a trailblazer, she made it easier for women after her to get involved in writing and publishing. Montgomery was also a powerful voice in many feminist social movements including the women's suffrage movement, which meant that not only was Montgomery an avid feminist, but also a role model for young women and girls herself. Lastly, Montgomery was significant because she battled mental health issues for over 30 years, yet still stayed strong and helped pave the way for others, which really inspired many future aspiring writers.

Lucy Maud Montgomery was also very influential. Her novels, Anne of Green Gables, in particular, have put PEI on the world map, and her books continue to bring in visitors to her home province today, leaving a lasting economic boost for her province. Montgomery was also very active in social matters and helped in the fight for equality.

Lucy Maud Montgomery wasn't just an influential writer, she was also a passionate women's rights advocate and trailblazer. She truly is one of Canada's most influential women. BL.

# RUBY LUO



BY RYAN LI - GYP

True leaders aren't leaders by choice. They are called to it. Ruby Luo was living the Canadian dream as an engineer for the City of Calgary. But in 2009, she noticed a huge problem: immigrant parents and especially women weren't getting the help that they needed to help raise their kids in a foreign country. This lack of representation and support inspired her to give up her job and career in order to provide support to people who desperately needed it. She went back to school and started working for a women's counselling service that helped immigrant women with the mental and physical challenges that came with living in a new country.

In 2017, Ruby left her counselling job so that she could found IvySpirit Education, a firm that helps families navigate the struggles of college applications and started giving free seminars with special guests as a means to further educate and support her listeners. Ever since the pandemic hit, Ruby has been broadcasting online with special guests at least three times every week on various issues that are relevant to families. She has given over 1000 free seminars over the past 10 years and has spoken to audiences of over 10,000 people.

Not only has Ruby been helping inform people, but she has also saved lives. Ruby has been a longstanding advocate for mental health and has provided guidance to many teens and parents on how to improve their mental health, going so far as to prevent people from inflicting self-harm on themselves or attempting suicide. This amazing fact is just one of the many accomplishments that Ruby has achieved in her life.

Ruby isn't just a motivational speaker and entrepreneur, however. Ruby was also a co-editor of a series of Chinese books that were written in order to inform and educate Chinese parents about different universities around the world. Alongside her free seminars, she hopes to reach one million people with her powerful message and strong support.

To conclude, Ruby Luo is a woman of many talents and has used them all to help others succeed in their lives. As such, she is the definition of an influential woman and is an inspiration to us all. Ruby has not only answered the call, but has done so much more, and thus should be one of the many leaders that we celebrate during this year's International Women's Month.BL.

COVER STORY

# DISCOVERING GOLD



**MEET SAMUEL MIELE**  
OWNER AND CEO OF VISION LUXX



# **VISION LUXX CEO SAMUEL MIELE DISCUSSES HIS VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE MULTI-MEDIA EXPERIENCE**

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*BY SHERI HAWKINS*

*Even though he's just turned 18, Sam has been running his own businesses for over two years.*

*Sam started off as a solo entrepreneur during the pandemic, doing social media marketing for real estate agents. Now he has a podcast and a team of six -- video editors, photographers and marketers -- working with him.*

*At the end of April, Sam's company Vision Luxx is expanding into a 3,000 square foot space in St. Catharines that will include spaces for professional photo shoots, private rooms for podcasters and space to hold large-scale events.*



# MEETING SAMUEL MIELE

H ave you ever wondered what it would be like to meet someone famous, but before they were famous? Imagine being the girl who stood next to Beyoncé in the church choir, or perhaps a childhood friend of Will Smith from West

Philadelphia, but before he became “The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air” and “slapped the s\*\*t” out of Chris Rock on live television. That’s the feeling I experienced the first time I met Samuel Miele.

As any fan of social-media guru Gary Vaynerchuk (known more commonly as “Gary Vee”) would know, as a young kid, Gary was a hustler.

I recall him sharing a childhood story about how he set up his lemonade stand in his neighborhood. Instead of just parking his foldable table and stack of cups on his front lawn like most kids his age would do, he scouted out the area and chose the busiest intersection, because he instinctively knew it would drive better business.

Meeting Sam is what I imagine it would've been like to meet a young Gary Vee, when he was just a hard-working teen-aged hustler, with a keen mind, competitive instinct, and a deep-rooted desire to succeed. Much like Gary, Sam walks that fine line between confidence and cockiness with veritable ease, having an almost fearless awareness of his own capabilities, while at the same time, possessing an easy, nat-

# MEETING SAMUEL

ural ability to connect well with others through genuine kindness and authenticity. At the tender age of 18, Sam has already figured out what it takes most of us a lifetime to discover, that life is about connection, building relationships and the belief that anything in life is possible if you're willing to work for it.

As a young kid growing up in St. Catharines, Sam recognized from an early age that he didn't "fit inside the box". Often scolded by teachers for being too loud, talking too much and having too much energy, he didn't perform well academically. In high school, he failed math twice, dropped out of summer school, failed French, nearly failed science, and perhaps most surprisingly, almost failed his business class. Feeling demotivated by heavy-handed teachers who were intent on hammering him to "behave" and



OWNER AND CEO OF VISION LUXX

"calm down", while also seeing his peers with high GPAs given the opportunities he wasn't granted, Sam felt inspired to work hard at a young age so he could prove to others what he was capable of.

I 8



*"IN THOSE EARLY DAYS, MY MOTIVATION WAS DEFINITELY IN THE WRONG PLACE", RECALLS SAM. "AS I'VE GROWN, I'VE RECOGNIZED THERE'S SO MUCH MORE TO BE GAINED BY BEING KIND AND STAYING HUMBLE."*

# WHERE I AM

There were two very notable supporters in Sam's life, the first being his mother who is his biggest fan and constant cheerleader. "When I started my business, my mom encouraged me to make cold calls and she would tell me what she thought of my videos," he says. "She coached me on how to communi-

cate with people." The second was his grade 10/11 Co-op teacher, Charles Koop.

"Charles was the one teacher whom I felt genuinely supported by," Sam intimates, "He not only encouraged me to take a full day of Co-op so I could work full-time on developing my business, he also fought for

it. The principal didn't want to grant me a full day but agreed to it only because of Charles insistence that I would be well-suited for it". Sam adds, "If it wasn't for him, I would not have excelled in my business the way I have."

# DISCOVERING GOLD

Since he was a young child, Sam understood the value of a strong work ethic. At 13 years old, he worked just for tips at a fish fry at the 809 Newark Air Cadet Squadron in Niagara-on-the-Lake. When he was old enough to be employable, he got a job at McDonald's where he committed to working for one year.

"It wasn't for me", Sam states. "But in retrospect, I'm grateful for the experience. I realize I had to do something I didn't enjoy in order to understand how important it was to put my energy into doing something I loved. Thanks to McDonald's, I learned systemization, organization, teamwork, motivation and how to treat employees. I also learned how to treat people based on how I want to be treated. It was a big lesson for me."

One thing Sam quickly discovered he had a natural ability for was sales. "I was actually really good at up-

selling", he asserts. "While I worked at the drive-thru, I would get into a rhythm, and even just talking to people over the headset gave me a positive way to redirect my energy."

After leaving McDonald's and spending another year in sales at Sport Chek, Sam decided he wanted to make his business his full-time gig. So, in early 2020, he applied for the summer company program offered through the DMZ. [Note: DMZ Basecamp is an 8-week intensive student incubation program that helps to develop young, creative-minded entrepreneurs.] However, almost immediately after he applied, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and the DMZ withdrew their programming.





Undeterred, Sam applied for a grant through the St. Catharines Business Enterprise Centre (SCBEC), but he didn't get that one either. However, the SCBEC encouraged him to apply for admission into the Ryerson Tech Incubator Program, and he was accepted.

With his signature good-natured grin, Sam recalls, "While most high school kids were at the beach in the middle of the day, I was sitting in front of a Zoom camera wearing a suit and tie, for five days a week, for two months of the summer."

Upon completing the Ryerson program in the summer of 2020, and again in 2021, Sam dove headfirst into developing his business, which, up until that point, had only been a small side hustle that provided him with a minimal source of income. Upon the advice of a friend who urged him to consider pursuing the idea of creating listing videos for real estate agents who were largely thriving as a result of the uptick in the housing market, Sam devised a plan of action.

Firstly, Sam paid his sister \$50 a week for one month, to help him create social media posts from houses they found on-line. Secondly, he started cold-calling real estate agents and sent them the graphics, as a way of demonstrating what he could do with their images. Thirdly, he offered to give them three weeks of free services, including photography, videography, and social media management.

The first person to take him up on his offer was Tracy Phelan, a high-performing agent with Remax. After the three weeks of free services, Tracy hired him and remains his client to this day.

"I'm very grateful to Tracy for giving me a chance", Sam says appreciatively, "That's what really got the ball rolling."

Sam got his second client as a result of a bit of bad luck that worked to his advantage. "A friend of mine was selling



their home with the help of an agent named Vanessa Moore," Sam states. "Her photographer contracted COVID, and the homeowner, my friend, recommended me to Vanessa as a substitute."

Shortly after that project was completed, Vanessa hired him on a more permanent basis. "It's been a series of uphill victories ever since", Sam says optimistically.

The question remains, how did this tenacious teenager transition from running a small real-estate marketing business to owning “one of the largest video production companies in Niagara”?

Sam explains, “When I started my business, I was in it for the money. I was hungry and I wanted to be known as ‘the most successful person coming out of high school’. By the fall of 2021, I was doing well for myself financially. But to just ‘make money’ and not enjoy the process of building my business through networking and meeting new people, was unfulfilling.”

Sam continues, “The number one thing I’ve learned in business is the value of building relationships. If you focus on building strong connections, you WILL be successful, no matter what you choose to do. You’ll care less about the money and more about being close with people. Sadly, that’s where a lot of people in business get it wrong, and unfortunately for them, they’ll find out someday, hopefully before its too late, that truly it is not about what’s in your pocket. There’s nothing more unfulfilling than chasing another dollar. But building relationships? That’s where the honest joy comes in.”

“*IT’S ALL ABOUT  
RELATIONSHIPS*”

# Vision LUXX

It was this shift in his thinking ten months ago that inspired Sam to start his podcast series, "Meeting Gold".

"Inviting people to come on my podcast for a chat gave me the opportunity to reach out and connect with people, with no hidden agenda, but solely to focus on creating a connection. Ever since then, I've had a drive to build relationships", says Sam.



Within a matter of a few short months, Sam's podcast channel (@meetinggold on Instagram) reached 50,000 accounts organically, with no money spent on advertising.

Sam has recently started a new series in which he and his team walk around populated spaces like Clifton Hill in Niagara Falls and The Pen Centre in St. Catharines, asking questions like, "If you had unlimited resources of money, what would you spend it on?", and "What are your passions / what drives you?"

"The point is to create a conversation", Sam explains. "It's exhausting, but I love it. Creating content both for my-

self and my clients and building a team of young people who are working towards a greater purpose is something I've become deeply passionate about."

Since April 2021, Sam's company, Vision Luxx, has now grown to include five people (six including himself). His team consists of two videographers and editors, a full-time social media manager, and two part-time client editors and videographers. His next immediate goal is to hire a full-time administrative assistant. That's pretty substantial growth for a first year in business and on the heels of a global pandemic.

"Honestly, there's plenty of other people out there that create incredible content with amazing people," Sam admits. "How we want to set ourselves apart is by connecting with our clients in a way that goes beyond just providing a service."

Some of the ways Sam does this is by having his clients

participate in fun activities, like the "What's in the Box? Challenge", where people are encouraged to put their hands in a box (filled with lizards, snakes or chickens, etc) to guess what's inside. He also loves the idea of having a prize wheel inside his studio, where every time a client comes in to work with them, they can spin the wheel

## *WHAT MAKES VISION LUXX DIFFERENT*

to win a discount on a photo shoot or media service, merchandise from a podcaster or even just a Tim Horton's gift card.

Perhaps the biggest advantage for Vision Luxx is the new building they'll be relocating to at the end of April 2022. Located on Fourth Ave in St. Catharines, this 3,000

square-foot studio boasts a 27-feet wide and 10-feet deep infinity wall, two designated rooms for podcast creators, multi-purpose offices and plenty of open space.

"We envision our studio being a place where people can come to collaborate." Sam states. We want to expand our network to include as

many people as possible.”

Sam continues, “We want to utilize as many tools as we can to extend our clientele beyond the business relationship. Our studio is going to allow us to expand by, for example, offering videographers in-house editing opportunities. Clients who run podcasts will be able to use our rooms designated for podcasters. Musicians and creative thinkers will be able to produce music videos or organize photo shoots for modelling agencies or brand photography. We’ll also be taking advantage of our open space to host client appreciation and networking events. It’s really exciting. It will be a space where people can help make their dreams a reality.”



Not surprisingly, I discovered Sam is a huge fan of Gary Vee, whom he considers the inspiration behind his business model, predicated on the belief that relationship-building, out-of-the-box thinking, leading with kindness and being fearless in your own self-belief is the key to success.

*FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS LIKE SAM*

# BEST ADVICE

- 
- *Company IG* @visionluxx
  - *Podcast IG* @meetinggold
  - *Personal IG* @samuel.miele
  - *Phone* 289-969-4807

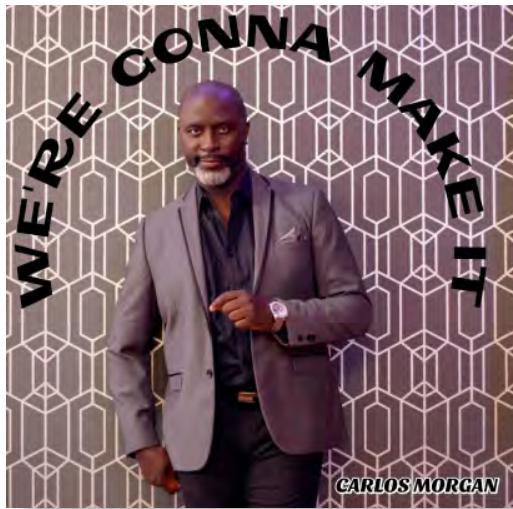
Sam concludes, “I think it’s interesting that my octane-level energy that used to get me in trouble in school is now the biggest reason why people say they hire me. It’s the number one thing I’ve got going for me. And I suspect its oftentimes the thing that makes a person unique that can also be their biggest asset.”

“My best piece of advice?” Sam reflects for a moment, then replies, “Honestly, if you

want to learn a business, literally just start one, and figure it out as you go. You can do anything at any age, there’s nothing stopping you.” BL.

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*This article was written by Sheri Hawkins. Sheri is currently the Chief Editor of Business Link Media digital magazine and the operator of the community platform, Mainly Niagara.*



## CARLOS MORGAN

Solroc Music M.A. Graduate/ C.E.O./Singer/Songwriter/Vocalist/Musician/Recording Artist/Music & Show Producer/Vocal & Performance Coach/ Social Justice Music Educator/Carli Parkes Collection/Actor

*Morgan is releasing his new EP, "We're Gonna Make It" on his own label, Solroc Music.*

*Morgan's EP will be an eclectic mix of Pop/Dance & EDM, R&B, Soul, and Country Soul songs. Songs on the new EP include Morgan's rendition of the Pop classic "Sunglasses At Night", R&B songs, "Love You All Over Again" and the title track, "We're Gonna Make It".*



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SHE BELIEVED SHE COULD  
**SO SHE DID.**



COMBINE Tryouts for Georgia Pursuit and Carolina Dream  
DATE May 1, 2022 TIME 10a.m

Tryouts for Ohio Sweepers  
DATE May 7, 2022 TIME 10a.m

COMBINE Tryouts for NY:Westchester Shooting Stars, NJ Storm, Connecticut Stars, Philadelphia Fever & D.C Eclipses  
DATE May 14, 2022 TIME 10a.m

\*All players must complete registration form, covid & liability waiver and Tryout fee \$75.00

\*website:[womensnationaldleague.com](http://womensnationaldleague.com)  
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SHE BELIEVED SHE COULD,  
**SO SHE DID.**

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## VANCEWORLDMEDIA

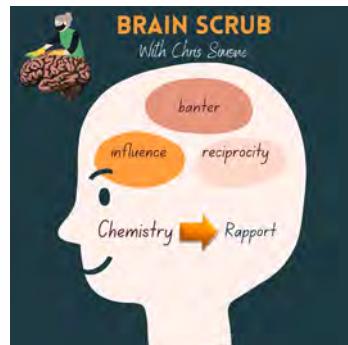
Located in the heart of Scarborough, VanceWorldMedia is a state-of-the-art video & recording studio. Created by Juno Nominated Artist Vance Mckenzie, the studio consists of a green infinity wall for use with virtual production/green screen production, as

well as doubling as a large event space. The facility also contains multiple studio rooms for audio recording and video editing. Guests and clients can relax in the mezzanine lounge located on the second floor overlooking the live room.



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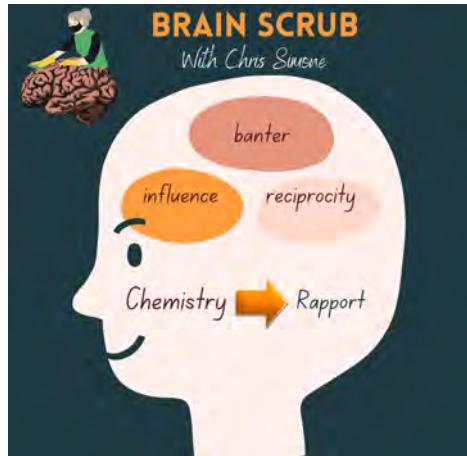


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## RESHAPING THE WORKPLACE AFTER COVID-19

*Relationship Expert Chris Simone Explains How Transitioning from Chemistry to Rapport Can Improve your Company Culture*

BY SHERI HAWKINS

Over the past twenty years, there has been a distinctive shift in societal values with respect to workplace culture. Today's prospective employees are seeking workplaces where they can intertwine their beliefs with those of their employers. In fact, a recent LinkedIn survey found that 65% of people would prefer to forego a fancy title and a higher rate of pay to work for a company that aligned with their vision of purpose and success. As employers grapple with how to recruit top candidates and retain employees, they must rethink how they're building a culture that unites people around a common cause.

# MEET CHRIS SIMONE

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As a middle child in a family of thirteen siblings, Chris learned at an early age that developing a positive rapport was a key component to fostering healthy relationships with others. Currently the owner and operator of Bridgewater Yoga Studio in Chippawa ON, Chris is also on the Board of Directors for two non-profit organizations, a member of Lions Club International and a registered volunteer teacher for Pathstone Mental Health.

As a naturally inquisitive person, Chris developed a keen interest in understanding how our ability to reshape how we think can dramatically improve

our relationships with each other. He discovered that the same functional rules apply, whether you're dealing with the people in your everyday life (family, community, workplace) or international global relations.

After years of intensive study, Chris developed a system with the intent being to out-smart and outmaneuver life's barriers by increasing our ability to communicate well with others, regardless of our surroundings. Now working to build an audience through his YouTube and Spotify podcast "BRAINSCRUB", Chris seeks to educate people on how applying his basic principles can help them improve their relationships in their homes, community, and workplace.



"The whole narrative of BRAINSCRUB is to move from chemistry to rapport in our relationships with ourselves and within our community," says Chris. "And top-drawer rapport requires three main components: banter, influence and reciprocation."

Chris continues, "Each of those three pieces have ten additional categories. Using etymology, linguistics, and discernment to design your own unique grouping, you can determine for your-

self where you fit by picking one component from each category. Or in more simplistic terms, by recognizing we are all in different places in our journeys, we can be unified by what we have in common.

"We all experience the same emotions, and our needs are the parents of our feelings," Chris explains. Once we're able to establish what our individual needs are, we can seek to better understand the needs of others."

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHEMISTRY AND RAPPORT?



"You know when you see two people walking down the street together and their hands touch? There's an easy, comfortable fluidity to their movements, like there's a built-in sense of familiarity. That's rapport," says Chris. "In relation to the workplace, rapport is what you develop when you encourage each other and collaborate with like-minded people whose values align with yours. Chemistry on the other hand, is what you experience when you're living in another person's values. There's a

commanding control structure in place. It's tense and uncomfortable, and it's not enticing to be around."

According to Chris's observations, many businesses, even ones with previously healthy workplace cultures, have had to shift from rapport to chemistry as a result of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chris points out that an important part of developing easy rapport in the workplace is that employees need a definitive schedule and a clear-cut chain of command. They also need to feel safe to offer suggestions and know they are being heard. However, due to the unpredictable shifts that small business and restaurant owners have had to face because of lockdowns and government-mandated restrictions, they've been unable to provide their employees with stable schedules. Having to cut back costs in order to remain open, owners have had to minimize their workforce while taking on more responsibilities themselves.

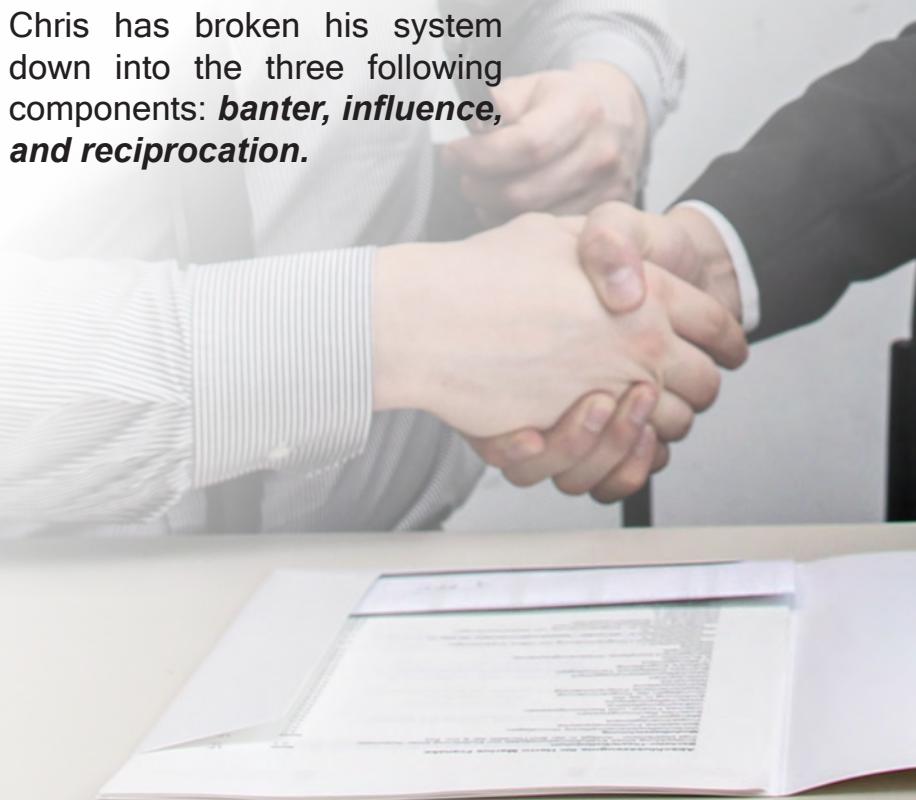
"For example, with restaurant owners now working in the kitchen or waiting tables, there's no longer a well-defined chain of command," Chris describes.

"Not to mention the loss of rapport between the business and their customers. Wearing masks and enforcing physical distances, along with being restricted to take-out or limited capacity seating has greatly diminished the joy of the dining experience for the customer."

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## HOW CAN THE SMALL BUSINESS OWNER TRANSITION FROM CHEMISTRY BACK TO RAPPORT?

Chris has broken his system down into the three following components: ***banter, influence, and reciprocation.***



## BANTER

*Invest time into talking to people. Look around and be aware of your surroundings. Start paying attention to others and looking to who you can help. Practice friendly conversations using slang and informal speech.*



*"There's a great book I would highly recommend called, 'Talking to Strangers' by Malcolm Gladwell," Chris recalls. "It talks all about the importance of saying what you believe and challenging your own assumptions. And in relation to how this applies to your employees, find out what they need and allow them to be heard. Because business owners have been so stressed with simply trying to survive, they've lost sight of their ability to engage in a meaningful way. By focusing on investing time into serving the needs of your employees, you will be able to help them re-establish a sense of familiarity within their environment."*



## INFLUENCE

*Amplify your influence by trusting more people. Look around for ways you can use leverage. Give others a voice. Ask people questions, ask them their opinion of you; being honest cultivates respect. Clean up your inner dialogue. Get in touch with your*

*friends. Recognize the power of your language and the juice in your mistakes. Get rest. Be more empathetic. Start talking about what people aren't talking about and you'll become a thought provoker and a person of influence.*



*"Rattle the cage in your life," Chris states emphatically. "Now is the time to invest your time, your money and your influence back into your business."*

## RECIPROCAT

*Shape your decisions by asking questions from the group. Listen more than you talk and ask quality questions with clear intent. Foster an environment of open communication. If there is a prob-*

*lem, expose it. Take accountability for your words and expect the same of your employees. This will help create an environment of transparency and trust.*



*“Say what you believe, and believe what you receive”, Chris concludes. “And perhaps most importantly, master your skills, not the illusion of failure or success.”*

## ABOUT THE PODCAST

*Chris’s podcast BRAINSCRUB includes four segments: 1) “Everybody Eats”: focusing on nutrition and gut health; 2) “Real Value Reviews”: reviewing local product-based businesses; 3) “The Dad Hour”: supporting dads by discussing subjects related to raising kids from a paternal perspective, and 4) “Longform Con-*

*versations”: learn the history and gain an in-depth understanding of show guests through open and honest dialogue.*

*BRAINSCRUB can be found on YouTube and Spotify. You can also contact him directly at: chris@bridgewateryoga.ca* BL.

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*This article was written by Sheri Hawkins. Sheri is currently the Chief Editor of Business Link Media digital magazine and the operator of the community platform, Mainly Niagara.*



## INVESTING AND CREATING WEALTH IN MULTIFAMILY APARTMENT BUILDINGS

*"Take Care of Your Investments and Your Investments will take care of You"*

*Daniel P. Chin, founder of Chin Property Investments. Daniel believes in investing in multifamily dwellings because it provides a very stable growth environment for your investment and your cash is consistent and predictable.*

***Why buy and hold over the long term is the best way to create wealth in Real Estate?***

- *If property values are higher, you can refinance to take out equity and then use it to purchase more rental properties*
- *If you don't ever sell, you don't pay capital gain taxes*
- *If you hold onto real estate, you receive many tax benefits or deductions.*
- 

*These are some consulting investments tips on purchasing their multifamily buildings for rentals;*

# „ Q & A

## **1. Why should potential clients select you to do their real estate portfolio?**

“Always do your research on anyone that you are going to deal with or plan to invest with. The advantage to working with me is I have a proven track record. I own eight properties and I manage thirty high quality multi-family apartments. I have also purchased over 6 million in assets as long-term investments which, in 25-30 years, will be mortgage free.”

“I specialize primarily in multi-family dwellings, rather than single family dwellings, student rentals or rent to own properties. Rental properties require a lot of service and maintenance. I also have reputable business relationships and infrastructures in place for property management. I’m often able to procure large discounts from suppliers and service companies (HVAC, Hardwood Flooring, Tiles, Roofing, etc.), information I am then able to pass along to my clients.”

“I am not afraid to take risks on properties that require a lot of renovation work. With these properties, I have the ability to create and add value from renovations, which puts my clients into the basket of investors who are going to find the diamonds in the rough.”

## **2. I want to purchase a four-family dwelling. What process and procedures do you recommend?**

“When looking for a multi-family building, location where there is a strong demand and growth is the biggest component. The property has to make sense by having the right cash flow. When looking at a property, you’ll need to know the bottom line, primarily the rental income of each dwelling, including all operating expenses, and the cost of the monthly mortgage debt payment, if there is one. If the property will be able to service all expenses, you can make a profit.”

“Next; is the location of the property in a good area? If you are not sure if the multi-family dwelling is in a good area, you can inquire at the City Office, or simply ask people living in the neighbourhood. If it is currently rented, find out what the current rental agreements are. You can get this information from a real estate agent, but do your own research as well.”

“Some other questions to ask are, how old is the roof (25 years), hot water heater / water tanks (10-14 years); and furnace (25 years)? If these large-scale items need to be replaced, you’ll need to factor that into your cost.”

### **3. I have just purchased an eight dwelling Vacant Unit Property Investment. Can you tell me where to start on renovations?**

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“The first thing that has to be done before renovating your apartment rental units is, you have to put yourself in the shoes of people wanting to rent it. Renters like nice-looking, clean, and up-to-date properties. They do not like make-shift apartments. So, make sure that your apartment rentals look modern, with an excellent floor plan layout, appliances in good condition, spacious closets, and up-to-date bathroom design. I always say, ‘Do it once and right’, and ‘Treat your rental like a business.’”

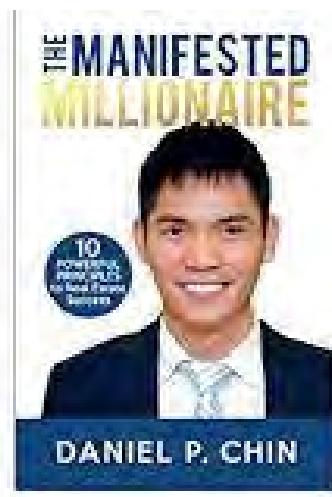
“The next step is to assess how much it will cost to complete the renovations and ensure that it is up to City Code. I always advise my clients not to go cheap, try to cut corners or take the ‘do it yourself’ approach without city approval; especially when converting these dwellings into apartments.”.

“Thirdly, always get a licensed contractor and make sure that everything is in writing. Another important tip: do not buy cheap materials for your apartment renovations because you will need to anticipate a lot of wear and tear over the years.”

“Always make sure to have the right insulation (spray foam) so that your property can stay warm in winter and cool in summer. When installing your windows and doors; always make sure that the insulation is done before you install them. This will save you money on your future electricity bills. Also, make sure you have heater friendly and efficient gas furnaces, and that your water tank can handle the number of tenants per unit (usually 50 gallons of water are required for every 4 tenants).”



*Daniel P Chin is available for consulting services if you need advice and help with your investment property (s). He is very knowledgeable on multi dwelling properties and knows how to get them ready for apartment rentals*



*Daniel P. Chin wrote a book The Manifested Millionaire Daniel P Chin, in which he shares the “do’s and the don’ts” of becoming a Real Estate Investor. You can purchase this book on Amazon or his website.*



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## DON'T FORGET YOUR SELF-TUNE UP

*You awaken each day with a trillion items on your to-do list. Everything is fast-paced, one thing after another with no time in-between. You are busy for most of the day, and you find yourself starting with a full tank until you find yourself empty at the end of the day. You run around in circles trying to scratch things off your list. You have your phone in hand, checking social media constantly to ensure you're not missing anything. Stressing and stretching yourself for your job, family, and whomever else needs your attention, and before*

*you know it, it's time for you to go to bed to wake up and start the same routine all over again.*

*Most people are operating in a chaotic state 24/7 and burn themselves out. It's 24/7 because even their minds don't have a chance to rest, which means they hardly ever get the proper rest their body requires and deserves. So why are people stressed, stretched, and overwhelmed for a large portion of their lives? It's because they feel like they are not being productive*

*if they're not busy every day? So why do they wear themselves out to compete with others, work themselves to death to have more things, and feel the need to prove themselves?*

*The truth is that these beliefs are all superficial. Everyone ultimately finds out they can never catch up and can't win with competition because it goes from competing with one person to competing with another. They'll never have enough and can never fully meet someone else's expectations. The only thing that will happen is they will burn out trying, and it will ultimately take a toll physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.*

*When was the last time you turned the television, phone, and computer off? Surrounded yourself with complete silence, shut down the noise of your thoughts, listen to your heart as it beats, take in the fresh air, and allow your body to relax as you slowly inhale and exhale? How long has it been since you took time to look after your mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing? When a car doesn't*

*work correctly, the owner usually takes it to the mechanic and has them check it out. If the vehicle goes down, that will put the brakes on their daily activities, and they won't be able to get around as they could before. Just as a car is a vehicle to get you around town, your body is the vehicle that gets you through life. Yet, when your body shows signs of stress, problems, and issues, they often go ignored or put off until there is a severe issue. At that time, it's usually when all energy, strength, and resources are depleted, and now the systems are seriously sounding the alarms. Something as simple as a check-up that would have only taken a small amount of time in the beginning now requires a significant amount of time, attention, and resources to fix.*

*Don't wait until you've blown your engine to get a check-up. Instead, ensure you're taking time to check in with yourself and getting tune-ups consistently to ensure your physical vehicle operates at its fullest potential in all areas to ensure you're performing correctly in life.*



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