

A man in a dark suit and light blue shirt is leaning against a stone wall in front of a large window. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows a building with a large window and some greenery outside.

Profiles of SUCCESS

LOWER MAINLAND EAST EDITION

*Success
by Any
Definition*

Success by Any Definition

By Kate Richardson

Success is a familiar friend to Don Butt. From the time he was a teenager, driving a car he bought himself that was the envy of his friends, to his first job when he quickly became the number one sales associate in Canada, to his real estate career where he was honoured last year as the only individual Tri-City RE/MAX realtor to ever achieve the prestigious “Chairman’s Award,” Don Butt has achieved all the indicators of success. He has achieved these rewards, however, by focusing on his definition of true success: valued relationships with family and friends. “Life is about people,” Don explains. “Success in life is based on the relationships you create along the way, and the positive impact you leave behind. I truly believe what my slogan says: I’m not number one; my clients are.”

Born in the Tri-City area, Don started early to pour his energy and drive into reaching goals by doing what he loved. To buy that car as a teenager, he bought leftover flowers from wholesalers, took them to swap meets and, using his natural sales ability, made more money in one 12-hour day than he could have made in a part-time job for a week. “I talked to everyone who walked by,” Don says. “I made friends with them. I stayed at my booth all day and even went without lunch to earn as much



money as I could towards the car that I wanted, and college.”

After college, Don put his success formula to work at a car audio company. “I thought I was the luckiest guy in the world to work in a business that was my hobby,” Don says. “Because I was passionate about what I was doing, I excelled quickly and became number one in Canada.” When the audio store was bought out, Don chose his brother’s real estate appraisal business and moved quickly from not knowing anything to setting productivity

records. “Once I had the confidence and knowledge of the business, I did it to the best of my ability and became the highest producing appraiser in the office,” Don says.

Knowledge of the appraisal business was one of the factors that built the foundation for Don’s real estate business. He had also, as a hobby, started buying houses and renovating them for resale. Once again, his hobby became his passion. The combination of the appraisal business and the home renovation hobby gave Don the information and

enthusiasm he needed to confirm his direction towards real estate.

Three years after earning his license and launching his real estate business, Don was approached by RE/MAX Sabre Realty to join their sales team. He jumped at the opportunity because he knew that RE/MAX attracted top-producing realtors. He partnered with Phil Haig, a knowledgeable and hard-working realtor. The pair became the number one real estate team in the Tri-City after its first year, and remained number one for five consecutive years. “My experience with Phil taught me that success is earned,” Don explains. “Phil was a wonderful mentor and I will be forever grateful.”

In 2003, Don struck out on his own, but stayed with RE/MAX Sabre. “This agency is home to over 70 of the area’s most active, productive, and dynamic sales associates,” he explains. “Year after year, RE/MAX takes the highest market share in the Tri-Cities and I wanted to remain part of that. I am surrounded by realtors who respect and support each other, and I cannot imagine working anywhere else.”

With experience and success under his belt, Don aligned his real estate goals to his personal philosophy. “To learn the business quickly, I had focused on sales numbers,” Don explains. “Now my goals are to excel at what I do and to make sure that all my clients are thrilled. The magic formula for my ongoing success is to think about the future while I’m working today. By focusing on the happiness of my clients, the sales come naturally. I do whatever it takes to make a lasting impression.”

Don now works out of his home office so he can support his wife Gilda and their four small children, all under seven years of age! “Gilda had held to her promise to look after everything on the home front while I put in the 14-hour days I needed to build the foundation of my business,” Don explains. “Now I have more balance to be able to spend



time with my children and my wife. Having a home office, and a wonderful assistant, Kelsey Woodliffe, who regularly helps me after hours and on the weekends, allows me to take care of all of my clients’ needs, and spend time with my family and friends as well.”

Rare at his level, Don works equally with both buyers and sellers in the Tri-City area of Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, and Anmore. He believes that this balance gives him a unique ability to connect buyers and sellers within his own contacts, and he generally has a good selection of buyers for people selling properties, ranging from a hundred thousand dollar condo to a one million dollar home. Don also maintains good relationships with other brokers and goes out of his way to deal fairly with fellow realtors. “You’re nowhere without the respect and support of fellow realtors,” he emphasizes.

Don uses all the real estate marketing tools – flyers, mailouts, advertising, newsletters, website (www.donbutt.ca) – but spares no expense to ensure that his marketing materials impress his clients. His full-colour multi-page feature sheets, for example, are

renowned for their quality. But Don feels his most valuable asset is his ability to negotiate the best deals for his clients. “Negotiating fuels me,” he explains. “It gives me an opportunity to shine on behalf of my clients. And every dollar I save them, or every step I make to ensure they get the house on a multiple offer, simply ensures me a client for life.”

One happy client said, “The sale of our home in an extremely competitive market was a huge burden off our shoulders, and our price expectations were met despite the fact that many other similar homes in our neighbourhood were selling below the number we wanted! ... We couldn’t be happier with the purchase of our new home, and we fully realize that our offer likely wouldn’t have been successful without your help. In a multiple-bid situation, you kept us calm and, most importantly, you made sure we had everything organized so that our offer was attractive. We learned afterwards that the sellers appreciated the way you prepared the offer, and it was the deciding factor in our favour. We had been prepared for disappointment,

but were thrilled with the outcome!" Another said, "Don worked with us for 18 months until he found us a home that met all of our needs. During that time Don also presented us with an investment opportunity, which I invested in strictly based on my belief in Don's knowledge. Once again, he did not disappoint us. Anyone interested in purchasing or selling a home in the Tri-City area should use Don Butt."

Don's value to his clients is enhanced by his knowledge of home improvement and construction. By renovating homes, and even building his own home while working those 14-hour days, Don developed a thorough understanding of home construction and repair. "I can look at a house with a builder's eye or an experienced home renovator's eye," Don says. "I can tell

my clients the possibilities of a home, and even how much it will cost. To love what I do and be able to add value is a dream come true for me."

Don's success can be measured in many ways. He was the Tri-City's number one individual RE/MAX realtor in 2003 and 2004, and, despite being in competition with teams of realtors, was in the top 50 of over 7,000 realtors in the Vancouver Real Estate Board last year. His negotiating skills have given him 21 highest price records in the first six months of this year.

But Don's personal measure of his success is his ability to listen to his clients' needs and deliver what they want, while maintaining a high level of personal integrity. "It is the only way I do business, knowing I have given my best to the client and realizing I have

created a new friend in the process," he says. "I am incredibly grateful to my clients, and I think they know it. I show each client enthusiasm, commitment, and appreciation. They reward me with a constant flow of referrals. That's success."

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