

# Prove Yourself *Right*

Along with advice from some of the most successful men in modern times, Napoleon Hill's inspirational masterpiece *Think and Grow Rich* told the tale of a discouraged prospector who walked away from a fortune, not knowing he was only three feet from gold. Now the Napoleon Hill Foundation has partnered with Greg Reid and author Sharon Lechter to carry on the tradition by inviting today's most successful leaders to share the principles, values, and attitudes they use to continue drilling toward their goals.

**A Story: Dave Liniger, co-founder of RE/MAX Realty**

To others it may have just been another sun-filled day in San Diego, but to me, sitting down with Dave Liniger was a meeting I will never forget. The first thing I asked him was to share what it was like in the early days, when they were just starting out. His answer surprised me. "It was brutal," he said. "It seemed that every call that came in was from another bill collector."

Dave and his wife Gail had started their real estate business in Denver in

1973 because they were unhappy with the commission-split system of the day that required sales professionals to give half of their commissions to brokers in exchange for office space and services. Dave and Gail wanted to change that dynamic; they believed that to attract and keep the best agents, brokers had to offer great compensation and services. In return the agents would share overhead expenses and pay management fees. Saying that the idea took some time to catch on is an understatement.

"The third year was worse," Dave recalled. "Every letter that came in was from another attorney's office calling me a fraud, and threatening to sue me and shut me down." When the phone rang, Dave said he would run across the floor to answer it to save his receptionist from the embarrassment.

Dave said that anything that could go wrong, did. He was in debt, his financial backers had vanished, the housing market collapsed, and the tongues of his industry colleagues were wagging viciously.



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“What did you do?” I asked.

He said that after a while he began to believe what others were saying about him. After all, if someone (or a bunch of someones) says negative things about you over and over, eventually you begin to think so yourself.

Then, according to Dave, “one day something shifted,” and he made a decision that would change his life. “I made a conscious decision to stop trying to prove everyone wrong—that I was not who they made me out to be—and I committed to proving myself right, knowing that I was not the way I was becoming portrayed.”

Captivated by his story, I leaned in. “What did you do?” I asked.

“I called each and every creditor and told them that I did not have the money we owed them, yet we could—and would—give them \$5 this week and \$5 next week, and if they hung in there with me, eventually I would send them \$50 this week and \$50 next week. But the main thing is that I told them not to give up on me, and promised not to file bankruptcy.”

Looking at Dave I could see the passion in his eyes as he poured his heart out. “You see, we knew for certain that what we were doing was right and that it would change the face of real estate as we knew it. We just needed a bit more time until things turned around.” It turned out Dave was right. In the fourth year Dave sold his very first RE/MAX franchise. Today, all these years later, RE/MAX Realty is the largest independent real estate corporation in the world.

What would have happened if Dave had quit? “Forget about me and my wealth,” he says. “I didn’t matter. But what would have happened to RE/MAX? How many people’s lives were changed because we stayed true to our vision, and did not give up when the going got tough? There are hundreds of thousands of people’s lives changed for the better with



billions in transactions that would not have happened if we had quit.”

## The Lesson: Prove Yourself Right

So many people told Dave he was a failure, but Dave knew who he really was. At first he wanted to succeed just to prove everyone else wrong; then he turned his attention to a better challenge—one that really mattered—he decided to change his focus and prove himself right. Because at the end of the day, you are the one who must make the decisions; you hold the key to how you choose to view and be viewed.

So here’s the question: are you spending your life in pursuit of something important enough to sacrifice everything on? Are you willing to set ego aside and take responsibility for your own success or setbacks? I hope so; because in the end, we are exactly where we choose to be.

One of the greatest lessons Dave shared was the power of commitment. He understood that to make his mark he also had to be willing to pay the price—the price of success, or the price of regret.

He chose wisely. And while he was reflecting on his story, he shared the one quote by the late Napoleon Hill that kept him going: “Whatever a mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve.”<sup>21</sup>

—Gregory Scott Reid

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