

CHAPTER 39

LIVE BOLDLY

BY DANNY NGUYEN, CCIM

With more than twenty years of commercial real estate experience, people have often asked how the journey has been for me. I love what I do and I can say that enthusiastically to anyone who asks, without hesitation—always. Making deals, creating the right partnerships and connections, and seeing the results of my efforts is exciting and wonderful. All these things bring me success and satisfaction both financially and in my personal life. Each day is a journey that I enjoy and one for which I am grateful to be a part.

During my time in commercial real estate, I've experienced a transformation that has impacted my entire life. I have this innate joy and happiness when I see my clients benefit from the results of my efforts. Those interested in commercial real estate have been able to develop the portfolios they desire, becoming contributors to their community.

In real estate, creating sustainable relationships is essential, but it is only the start. It's a merger of vision and ideas that lead to amazing things. I have met incredible people, including presidents, senators, governors, government leaders and leaders in the private sector. I've gotten to go on trade missions and submerge myself into different cultures and ways of conducting business. I have taken the opportunity to donate to many charities and non-profits, experienced the overwhelming feelings of gratitude and thanks that come from being a part of mission trips, and so many other things. From each of these experiences, I walk away with a valuable bit of advice that helps me gain a greater connection with the

people I meet. And the lessons learned and wisdom gained is priceless...

The journey and *the person that I have become* are incredible and fulfilling. I came to the United States as a political refugee from Vietnam; grateful for the opportunity and knowing that I had much to prove with the incredible opportunity I was given. I've learned a lot and there are six things, in particular, that I want to share with you. It is my hope that you will find the inspiration and guidance to act on them.

(1). Do what your heart and soul desire.

When you seek out a career where your heart and soul meet, you need to factor in these four things:

- Money
- Skills and talents
- Level of joy
- Meaning and purpose

There is no shame in being motivated by money when you are searching for a career. I certainly was because I knew one thing for certain: **I wanted to do better and have more impact.** Money helps! So, when I enrolled in college and later chose a career, I placed a lot of weight on this. Being honest with our motivations is important!

When we are being truthful about what drives us, we can find the balance, inspiration, and drive to succeed in our lives. We create roadblocks and obstacles because we didn't take the time to figure it out. So, to anyone who doesn't know what they are good at, you have to do an inventory of your skills, interests, and everything else and start dabbling in these areas to find the right formula. It will happen, but it won't happen without you putting forth some effort. Here's a bit about what my process looked like:

Driven by a natural desire to become an asset that gave back to my country, had respect for my opportunities, and also for making a name for my family and serving God, I wanted to show this vision to not only my Vietnamese family and ancestors, but to my new country.

When going to college, I had the opportunity to help people set up several small businesses – including nail salons in big shopping

malls – and used the money earned to help pay fees and bills during school and not accumulate debt. During that time, I saw the impact of entrepreneurial power and found my passion for commercial real estate.

After graduating from Texas A&M University, I decided to go into real estate. I knew it was the one thing that lit me up from the inside out and made me want to give all I had to being successful at it. Twenty years later, I am still doing that and many of my friends that I graduated with have switched jobs multiple times, still seeking out the job that truly ignites their purpose. I am humbled and grateful for having chosen the right career path for myself. I worked hard to make the right choice

(2). Be willing to pay a price.

The best way to learn success is to study success and then apply it. It takes action! Based on everything I've observed from people, one thing has remained universally true:

What separates successful people from unsuccessful people and happy individuals from unhappy ones is that some are not willing to pay the price for this success or the happiness they want. There is always a price and eventually it must be paid.

I see no reason to not pay the price right away so you have more time to enjoy both success and happiness. Why procrastinate on these amazing rewards that life has to offer? There is no reason. I want to share a personal testament with you about this process and how it played out in my life.

Thirty years ago, my father decided to pay the price for freedom by risking our lives escaping from Communist Vietnam. I was fourteen years old and on a small fishing boat with my father and seventy other people. My mother and five siblings were left behind. It was hard to think that we might never see them again, but this was a risk that had to be taken for a better future for all of us. We ended up spending close to twenty-five days in the Pacific Ocean, enduring a raid by Thai fishermen-pirates – in which we were robbed and the ladies on the ship were raped. We ended up in a Thai prison and a few different refugee camps in both Thailand and the Philippines before we were able to get to the United States.

Was it still worth it? Yes. My father had known that there may be a price to pay and he taught me to accept that. It was a valuable lesson.

All of the heartache and hardship of family separation, almost losing our lives because of a desire to experience a life many take for granted—a life with freedom, whether it be freedom of speech, enterprise, worship, travel, etc. These freedoms are privileges and for millions of people, life is a privilege to be celebrated and be grateful for. It was a catalyst to realize how much I wanted to give back for the opportunity I received and to remind my fellow Americans that freedom is not free, and we must treasure and respect it to enjoy its benefits.

My father and I had to start all over and adjust to our new lives as political refugees. This freedom was the foundation for us to build our future upon, including my career and the person that I have become today. If I could impact you with one thing, it would be this:

Whatever perceived or real difficulties, challenges, or adversities you have, be willing to embark on a new endeavor or journey and consider the price tag that you will pay for that item. This is what will bring you happiness, and your heart and soul will know that what you desire is worth the price. Not doing this is never worth that price—a loss of dreams, opportunity, and joy.

(3). Believe in God, Yourself, and America.

In order to believe in yourself, you must have faith in your Creator. There must be something out there that we believe is much bigger than us. If I didn't know this to be true, I would have had a much harder time enduring that Thai prison or those many days lying at the bottom of a boat without a roof and a broken-down engine, looking at the stars and the moon, the rain and the sun, and those waves that came over the edges of that rickety old boat.

People suffered on these journeys. My father certainly did, as well as the others that were around me. Back home, my mother and siblings were, too. How else do you remain strong and committed to the end results in the face of such adversity, if not through awareness of God? It takes you and the universe's Creator.

Faith also goes much further than that. You must also have faith in your country. For me, this country was America. I knew that I'd get

there some day and when I did, I'd have to know where I wanted to go from there. It would be the start of another journey. **THIS IS THE PLACE where dreams could come true!**

My belief was so strong that I made sure that I was no longer that political refugee, although those experiences are a fundamental part of me. Today, I am a man who looks out my living room window to see a replica of the Statue of Liberty out there to remind me. I have served as an elected city official in the city where I live in thanks to a voting process that ensures that opportunity due to the United States being a Republic. With work, I have received high accolades that have taken commitment and that I use to make my community better, including the CCIM, which is the highest designation in CRE that a professional can earn. I want to make a positive impact with everything I do. Without faith in America and God, these things would have never developed.

Is it scary? Of course, but it is absolutely worth it! These are all things to think about and to discover the answers you need, it takes faith and action.

(4). Stick with it until you've made it.

Not everything has always come easily for me, which is something that others may not realize. I recall having the intense feelings of failure when I first entered real estate. It was so frustrating!

I was waiting to close my first commercial deal and eager for it to get wrapped up and get that commission check, of course. I was working hard and very aware that my other friends that I'd graduated with and moved on to a 'real job' were getting paychecks and starting to live the dream. They had security and I felt like I had only uncertainty. It was all made worse when someone would ask, "Did you get a check yet?" I'd answer, "No, but I will soon." I claimed it and kept going, not willing to let anything stop me. Deep down I knew I want an opportunity, not security. I wanted the ultimate freedom to determine my own destiny and realize my fullest potential. And I am proud of that because it takes courage.

I had plenty of areas that I could keep gaining experience and growing while I waited. And finally, it did come! It felt great, but once again, it was only a stepping-stone on the journey I was meant to take.

Not only my life, but all lives have obstacles on occasion or perhaps a lot. You may get some unexpected bad news and such. It's what you do with a challenging situation that is important. Do you allow it to stifle you or do you find a way to make it through? You keep going!

It's so easy to get discouraged and quit, but those emotions are the enemy. Self-doubt is about the same as self-destruction. You have to dig deep and figure out what will keep you motivated. Here's what I do:

I think about what gets me going and will get me excited again! Today you are a little better than yesterday, and tomorrow you are better than today. Set goals and measure your own success.

(5). Enjoy success and keep rising.

The easiest way to remember where you've been and where you'd like to go is to keep records, evidence, and notes. These are your assets, equity, and inventory in what you've done and no one can take those away.

I have a habit of counting my blessings in a way similar to how a business owner may go over his profit and loss statement or year-end evaluation. Only my evaluation is not about money, it's about how many lives I have positively impacted in the process, about happiness. Some of this inventory is in my memories, and other parts are more tangible forms, such as business cards, contacts, a phone call, email, letter, postcard, or even a certificate of some sort. These things remind me that I am impacting other lives daily and that I am connected to success through my love of what I do. It feels great and if I do have a 'tough day,' I can access this inventory and get the reminders I need.

Being able to pull up these memories and specific events whenever I need them is how I define success. I could lose everything else but those things would still be positives on my balance sheet. These are the sources of my motivation, inspiration, and empowerment. They are my vitamins, the energy that gets me out of bed each and every morning—at 4 AM. I'm just ready to go because I have so much to go for. **What do you have to get up and go for?** *Take the time to find out today because tomorrow isn't too far away!*

(6). What if I hadn't done it?

Looking back, I sometimes wonder what would have happened if my father hadn't taken that bold move to get us to the United States. Everything would have been different and my life would not be what it is today. What if I had not stepped into this career boldly? Not only would I have missed out, but a lot of the people that I serve, my clients – my community – my city might have missed the benefits as well.

Now that I have over twenty years of real life experience doing something I love and a career that has transformed my life, I am ready to help as many people as I can to step into this career. It will make a difference in their own lives and also create a meaningful impact for their community and city, as well. I've used my calling to be an advocate for freedom and I am on a mission now. You'll find rewards that go beyond explanation and that impact you so profoundly that you may view what's around you from a new perspective—thankful to no longer be missing out on the bigger picture.

Go for it, my friends!



About Danny

With more than 20 years of experience in commercial real estate in Houston, Texas, Danny has *sold, bought, leased, managed, and developed* several multi-million dollar transactions for his clients: landlords, tenants, sellers, buyers and investors. Danny specializes on SHOPPING CENTERS, COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS and LAND.

Danny is a recognized expert in the disciplines of commercial and investment real estate with his CCIM designation – which is considered by many to be the “Ph.D. of commercial real estate.” He graduated from Texas A&M University where he received a Business Administration degree with a concentration in International Business & Marketing.

Danny has received several awards, certifications, an Honorary Degree, and even Proclamations from prominent government leaders, various organizations such as Chambers of Commerce for his economic development, entrepreneurship, leadership, community services, and City and Real Estate Industry contribution.

Danny has been seen, quoted and featured on ABC 13 News, the *Houston Chronicle*, Business Journals, *Forbes*, *International Toastmaster Magazine*, CCIM “Rising Star” 2007 Magazine, and many others. Danny was also interviewed on a radio talk show hosted by former State Senator Dan Patrick, who is the current Texas Lieutenant Governor, about Freedom and Entrepreneurs, and work ethics.

Danny has actively lead and participated in outbound trade mission trips to different countries, served as a City Councilmember at Large and International Relations & Economic Development Committee Chair – in Missouri City, TX and committee Chair of the Mayor’s International Trade Development Council in Houston, Texas.

Danny has been invited to speak with other Experts, International Diplomats, Dignitaries and well-respected leaders on different platforms and on different occasions about Leadership, entrepreneurship, International Relations and opportunity, Diversity and Inspiration. He has recently been invited to speak at the UN (United Nations) and share the stage with Brian Tracy at the Global Economic Initiative.

Danny has also co-created a new six-part training program CD series with Brian Tracy – a step-by-step program to help real estate agents break into Commercial Real Estate and be successful at it.

Boards served and Affiliations:

- Asian Real Estate Association of America – Houston – founding member Board of Directors

- Vietnamese American Chamber of Commerce – Houston – Co-Founding Chair
- American First Tower Owners Association - Board Member
- Houston Association of Realtors® – Former member, Board of Directors
- Texas Association of Realtors® – Former Director, Houston region
- Houston Association of Realtors International – former Honorary Advisory Member
- Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2009 – Houston West Chamber of Commerce
- Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOAPA) – Member
- Rice University’s James Baker Institute – Associate Roundtable
- National Speaking Association – NSA Houston – Academy Graduate and Member

As a business and property owner, Danny is a strong advocate of freedom of enterprise and property rights. He is married to Marie Nguyen and they have three awesome boys Jordan, Darrell, and Jacob Nguyen. Danny enjoys horseback riding, singing, playing the guitar, and flying private airplanes.

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