

Welcome to financial possibility

moneyville

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What this CEO learned as a hotel elevator boy

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Our Fame & Fortune series continues with ZoomerMedia executive Bill Roberts who believes great events turn on small details.

Describe your first job. What did it teach you?

My first salaried job at 14 was operating the service elevator at the old Laurentian Hotel in Montreal. That was an absolute hoot. I met sports figures, gamblers — great tippers — politicians and some of the sexiest women I've ever seen. Enough said! But it was an enduring eye-opener to the fun diversity and burlesque of life . . . and it paid overtime.

What was the first item you purchased with your own money?

A Paul Anka vinyl album. What was I thinking?!

What is the best financial advice you have ever received?

The short answer would be having my wife Sharon oversee our joint finances. She is truly Chancellor of the Exchequer. But more seriously, being conscious of life after full-time employment — what some call retirement but for me is probably only another chapter or life experience segue.

My financial adviser at the Queensbury Group, Rona Birenbaum, has been an amazing coach and guide in that regard. So I've maximized my RRSP and established an individual pension plan and they have been enormous pluses. While I'm firmly opposed to ageism in the workplace, it's nice to have even a modest next egg for the future.

Have you learned any financial lessons the hard way?

I could write a truly unbelievable and laughable book on it. But divorce is the fastest way to lose 50 per cent of your hard-earned wealth. It would be easier to simply buy someone you don't particularly like a big house and get that part behind you quickly.

Do you bank online?

No, I don't. I have a healthy skepticism for personal data and the online realm. There have been too many disturbing breaches, revelations and anecdotes.

Are money and success the same thing?

As an irregular Buddhist I go back to a talk the Dalai Lama once gave in Toronto, where he opined that too often vast wealth brings more suspicion, more anxiety and more jealousy into the world and into one's existence.

In my own view, I am convinced that great events turn on small details and that being obsessive about money robs folks of their capacity to appreciate and savour those tiny things or little pleasures life offers.

Please fill in the blanks:

Money can buy — AN AUDI TT CONVERTIBLE — but it can't buy — MY CHILDREN'S HAPPINESS.

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Bill Roberts, CEO of Vision TV, seen in his Liberty Village office.

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