

## Spotlight On: Ray and Nimi Singhal

Ray and Nimi Singhal, sales associates with the Shoreview/North Oaks office, believe that taking risks is one of the best ways to build your business.

Ray Singhal, who has his Ph.D. in pharmacology, was professor and chair at a major medical school in Canada and then the head of the research and development department for the largest multinational pharmaceutical company in India before beginning his real estate career. He, along with his wife Nimi Singhal, who has a Master's degree in special education, returned to the United States in 1999. They had lived in the United States since 1962 prior to Ray Singhal's assignment overseas. When they arrived in Minnesota, Ray Singhal decided that this was the time to pursue his passion for real estate, and he joined Coldwell Banker Burnet.

### Challenge; in the Beginning

Ray Singhal's first year in real estate was very challenging. "I didn't know anyone, and Nimi was still working as a full-time teacher in the Minneapolis Public Schools at the time," he said. "I didn't have a sphere. I didn't even know how to work a lock box." But, according to Ray Singhal, there's a great learning environment in the Shoreview/North Oaks office. "Jack McCarty [sales manager at Shoreview/North Oaks] taught me how to work a lock box. The whole environment is conducive for learning, and now we have Linda Dagenais as our branch vice president who is the best resource for supporting every thing we do."

Ray Singhal made only about \$22,000 and he put every dollar back into marketing. "I knew marketing was the backbone of this business," he said. "You have to let the whole world know who you are. Of course, there was hesitation about doing this, but I knew it would eventually pay off."



### Internet Marketing

Today, the Singhals put 42 percent of their gross income back into marketing. A large portion of that goes into Internet marketing. "More than 70 percent of home buyers and sellers use the Internet in the home buying and selling process," explained Ray Singhal. "People not only look for properties, they also look for the best agent to represent them." As part of their marketing plan, the Singhals maintain 12 different Web sites. "It's always challenging to make sure all of the information is current," said Ray Singhal. "But, we feel it's worth it." In 2002, Ray Singhal was invited to be one of the very few Allen F. Hainge CyberStars™ in the nation -- a prestigious networking group of Realtors specializing in Internet marketing.

The Singhals also believe that LeadRouter™ and the Home InfoLine are some of the best technological advancements at Coldwell Banker Burnet. They demonstrate the Home InfoLine in their listing presentations by having their clients call the system and enter one of their property ID numbers. "We really like the Home InfoLine, and we have great hopes and expectations for LeadRouter," said Ray Singhal. "We've already

had calls on our listings through the system. We think it's going to be very rewarding."

### Education

Coming from strong academic backgrounds, education is very important to the Singhals. When Ray Singhal first joined the company, President Robin Peterson was the executive vice president of the company. "I have great admiration for Robin," he said. "The very first CMA I did was through one of her courses. I had no idea what to do, so she took an hour of her time to help me. I still practice what I learned with her that day. She's absolutely an amazing person," said Ray Singhal. And Nimi Singhal agrees. "She's very energetic. We were very lucky to have her coach us."

The Singhals continually educate themselves. According to Ray Singhal, they earned most of the designations possible. "CRS, ABR, E-Pro, GRI, SRES, RECS, and CBS," he said. "We got them in the first few years in the business because we didn't have any marketing or selling skills. We needed to learn more, and it has proven to be very helpful."

The Singhals also graduated from Integrity Selling. "It changes your attitude," said Nimi Singhal. Ray Singhal explained that Integrity Selling helps you learn that what's most important is to care about your clients and make sure they are being looked after. "Once you have that 'let go' attitude, you don't care about the outcome," he said. "Integrity Selling has impacted us in a very meaningful way."

### Specialty Area

When the Singhals first began their real estate careers, they worked with any customer they could. Now, they are focusing on building

a specialty area, which includes golf course and waterfront properties in the Northeast metro region, specifically those homes on "The TPC" and "The Lakes" in Blaine. "Having a specialty area has helped our business," said Ray Singhal. "It's still early, and building a specialty area is a slow process, but we're consistently being recognized as experts in these areas. People call us to seek our opinions on pricing these homes."

### What Works

The Singhals believe that having a healthy body helps your business. "We work 16 to 18 hours per day, six days a week, and don't sleep a lot," said Ray Singhal. "But, we work out every day." He explained that exercising changes your mind set. "Exercise helps you get through the day. It gives you a healthy body and mind so you can stay focused and help others."

Ray Singhal also believes in maintaining a strong focus. "There are so many interruptions during the day that when you wake up in the morning, it's a good idea to decide what you want to get done during that day. For instance, we prospect for a minimum of three hours a day. This helps you resist the temptation to be diverted."

### Evolution

Ray Singhal believes that real estate is an evolving industry. "It's not just high tech, it's high tech with high touch," he said. "To be successful in real estate, it's no longer about location, location, location; it's about communication, communication, communication. It's about how well you connect with strangers and how you get them to trust you." When asked what it's like working together, Nimi Singhal said "It's fun! Whatever I don't want to do, he does."