

## LIFE STORY: TREVOR ABRAHAMSON, THE BILLIONAIRES' ESTATE AGENT



Meet Trevor Abrahamson, who heads up **Glentree International**, the estate agency that specialises in buying and selling property for the super rich. Fiona Keating met up with Trevor for tea in the classically beautiful surroundings of **The Cornthian Hotel**, in Whitehall Place, London. He has sold houses on Bishops Avenue to the tune of £50 million, so if there's anyone who knows about property and what makes the fabulously wealthy, it's Trevor.

### How did you start in property?

I was studying dentistry but gave up because I had a yearning to get into the commercial world. When I started, it was the worst time for property since the war – in 1974. It was the most horrible time, as people were escaping property while I was trying to get into it, which was mad.

It was purely accidental because my next door neighbour's father had an estate agency. So I thought I'd try that. I never looked back. It should have put me off because when I arrived there as a bright-eyed, bushy tailed rookie, The first thing the manager did was resign a few weeks later, leaving me to do whatever I thought should be done, without any expertise, knowledge or training.

### What was your philosophy of selling property?

I have never been bound by convention so I look at things in an unusual way. For instance,

the world of estate agency was all black and white. I called myself Glentree, which was bright, floridian green. We looked like landscape gardeners! I wrote to people and made audacious claims that I could sell their property and oddly enough we did.

### What do you have that makes you a success?

It's audacity, that lovely word hutzpah, huge effort and commitment, incredible determination to make things happen for yourself and other people. You need to love your fellow man, have people trust you, you need to carry people with you in a very short space of time. I need to carry their confidence, faith and trust. It's very difficult to do and there is an art to doing it. We were selling properties at audacious prices because our methods were unbridled, unconventional and innovative.

### Do you listen to other people's advice?

Absolutely not. I took the Nelsonian approach to whether there were ships out there or not. We floated the business against all probability. Nine merchant banks told us we were too small to float – but I fight Goliaths all day long. In six months, the shares rose faster than anything else since records began. So not the end of the world!

### What's been your most audacious marketing plan?

We didn't have any money to market the float so we decided to promote in the cheapest, most effective way. We had £30. So I put a sign up in Hampstead Ponds saying "Glentree plc more floatable than Noah's Ark." And all the rich investors passed by and thought "We have to get some of that stock". The stock went up by 2,800%.

### Do you ever worry about money?

I have fear and respect for money and materialism. It can buy you freedom, but it can buy you a lot of unhappiness as well.

### What are the most interesting properties you've sold?

Many times we've broken world records for prices achieved. For instance, a few years ago we sold one of the biggest, most expensive properties in the world [for £50 million]. It was called Toprak Mansion then. and was built by Halis Toprak, one of the wealthiest men in Turkey. To celebrate this we had a party with all the glitterati there to celebrate 35 years of being in business. President Gorbachev was our guest of honour.

### What's next on your agenda?

As a result of some innovative thoughts that I was nursing, I felt it was time for agents to have a major portal that they own. Two years ago I invited some of the biggest agents in the UK and there is a colossus in the making called Agents' Mutual. I'm on the board and it launches in the next 6-9 months, becoming one of the biggest websites in the UK eventually.

### How do you deal with billionaires?

Psychology plays such an important part. You have to know what turns them on, what they like. You don't grow a second head and grow horns if you are wealthy but you are a bit better at the game of making money. They are in the success business. They've barged a few people out of the way. You have to match them with your intellect because these people will eat you for lunch – and do!

### What has life taught you?

I've never broken my word in almost 40 years in business and I'm not going to start today. The idea that you can forsake your principles for success is absolute nonsense. I do give back to society in both organised charity and informal charity and that's very important. Every time I've given, I've got back twice as much. The essence of what I stand for is by all means look at the pinnacle of where you're trying to climb as a target. Look down at where you've come from. But most important of all, stop to take in the view.



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