

## Len Goldman on Panoramic Photography for Real Estate Part 2 of 2

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Len Goldman (LG) interviewed by Denis Knight (DK)

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Len Goldman is a professional real estate photographer from Canada who specializes in high resolution virtual property tours using 360° panoramas.

Len's indoor panoramas are notable for their elegant lighting and for the clean straight horizontal and vertical lines that he's able to achieve.

Visit Len's website at [customvirtualtours.ca](http://customvirtualtours.ca) or email [info@customvirtualtours.ca](mailto:info@customvirtualtours.ca)

*DK: OK, so the first question is, what's so good about using virtual tours for real estate?*

**LG:** OK. I'm ready for your questions actually because I've been looking at those questions. The first thing I have to say is that a virtual tour is giving people a lot more in depth of what a house looks like. If somebody just looks at a still flat picture they really can't visualize or feel that they're sort of within the room. To get that total perspective of the property, and it's just like being there. Also, virtual tours are there 24/7. Like an open house 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. People can go and look through the house and be in the house any time of day or night they want on the internet.

*DK: What are some of the benefits that your customers have said that they get from having your virtual tours?*

**LG:** Well, being customers as far as the client, the real estate agent, or the home owner. I mean, from the real estate agent's point of view, it is for them something that's there 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. From the home seller's concerned, what we tell the home seller when we finish the tour is that, 'Don't expect to see as many people running through your house as otherwise,' and they sort of at first get taken back, like 'What do you mean?' and I say 'Well, when there's a virtual tour of your house, people are already looking at the house on the internet. They're getting a virtual idea of what your house looks like inside, and get a full three hundred and sixty degree perspective of it.' And if they decide to call the real estate agent to see the house, they're already qualifying themselves, and more qualified that they're interested in your house, than somebody who just drives by or sees a flat picture in a newspaper and doesn't have any other better idea of how this looks. At least the people who are coming into your house are more qualified. You're going to have less people, but you're going to have to clean up your house less. You're going to have to keep it straight less. It's stressful enough, at least you know who's coming through has already seen your house in all respects, and when they come they're more qualified. What we have heard from both real estate agents, buyers and sellers is that the house looks like we portrayed it when we did the virtual tour.

*DK: And I guess because of all the effort that you've gone to in preparing the house before you took the photos, and then in carefully putting the tour together, basically when people look at that tour online, they're seeing the house in pretty much the best possible light.*

**LG:** That's right. And clients do like it because it's ... Karen and I ... in the beginning one of your questions you ask how I got into this, but Karen and I have bought and sold eleven houses in fifteen years. And basically it is very, very stressful. That's the only words I'll put forward. Because you gotta to make sure

the thing is clean, you gotta make sure it's ready for somebody to call at a moment's notice. So this way, it helps everybody out.

*DK: Can you give us a little bit of background about how you got involved in photography, and then in virtual tours?*

**LG:** Well, sure. I've been involved with photography since probably I was in early high school. Probably in my early teens. I was into shooting pictures. I had a dark room in my basement at the time. I used to do black and white processing, which is totally different to what we do today. So I've always had an interest in photography. There's a lot of people out there who I can't hold a candle to professionally and technically, they're much better than I am and know their way around a camera much better than I do. Although I try to keep up with some courses and such, but even our still photography, our portrait photography is what we call a natural style of photography, where we try to take people in a more natural way, than trying to get them to pose. And so, you know basically photography's always sort of been there in my blood. As I got older and have been an entrepreneur in different types of businesses over the years, and the one thing that my wife and I both enjoyed was photography. And we enjoyed obviously real estate, because we kept buying and selling houses. And it was a much less expensive way to go was to get involved in this business, and now we can go and shoot everybody else's houses without having to buy them. So we basically, I mean real estate was something we wanted to do. I didn't want to become a real estate agent. We started off doing portrait photography and still photography as we started part time starting to do virtual tours and photography for real estate. And it's just been a matter of, you know, it's progressed to that, and that's 90% of what we do is the real estate business.

*DK: So what are the top three things that somebody should know in order to successful in real estate photography and virtual tours?*

**LG:** Well, three things. I have them down here on your list. It's important that they have an eye for detail. And staging and composition are important. Having patience – you're dealing with so many different ... if you're dealing with real estate you're dealing with all sorts of people. It's no different from dealing in a retail industry. You might have somebody who's really pleasant ... we've gone into houses and, one I can remember in particular, the lady had lost it. She was totally in tears and we got there, and now she was realizing that her house was really getting sold. And she was crying on my wife's shoulder. And part of what we did was have to settle her down, and by the end of it she was real happy and settled down because we went through the process, we almost played psychiatrist in this particular case. So having people skills is very critical. And you need to be critical of your own work and strive for perfection. And you need to really have a passion for what you do. We spend a lot more time doing this ... it sounds

glamorous, but the amount of time we take from the time we leave our home office and drive to a tour, do the actual photography part of it, deal with the real estate agent or the client, get ourselves back to put the tour together, we don't make a ton of money when you break it down to the hourly situation. If we didn't love what we do, we couldn't continue doing this. If you don't love this type of work and have a passion for this, and like what your final result is that's part of the thing... I get a lot of satisfaction. You've said things to me, like 'Len, you don't need my help'. I've had other photographers and people get in touch with me and say, 'Len, your work is great'. And I guess sometimes everybody needs a little pat on the back. And at least you know it's not only for them. Other people recognize the type of work that you're doing. My wife's had a picture of one of the houses that we had done for a new home owner on the front page of one of the real estate magazines last month, and that was kind of neat. You know, it's nice to get recognized by your own peers. But you gotta love what you do, and if you don't love it then this is not worth the money. Because you don't make a ton of money at the beginning. We've been doing this for a while and we're only starting now to get better referrals. But you also lose business to the guy who's doing a cheap job because that's all the real estate agent in a lot of cases cares for.

***DK:** So if somebody was interested in getting into this field, what would be a good way for them to get started?*

**LG:** Obviously you need to get your equipment together and do some practicing. There's a couple of good companies out there that you could probably get hooked up with and get your feet wet. We started with a company called RTV. That's Real Tour Vision is the name of the company. That's where I got my pano head, that's where I got my original training. They have a good software package included with what they offer you that does tours very very well. The downfall is you can't do high definition stuff with them, it's not full screen. But if you want to learn the ropes and you want to learn the marketing, and they have blogs and they have good training, that might be a place to go. But again, getting involved with them is about \$1500 US to get going. So if you're going to take the alternate way to get going, then certainly you need to get some... it's not that difficult to become proficient at doing a virtual tour. If you want to go the next step of offering a better tour, then obviously you start doing more and editing your pictures and watching what you're doing, but the biggest thing about this business, and it's no different than any other business, if you have no selling skills and no marketing skills, it's going to be very hard to get into the business.

What happened with us for the first year, and again my background is sales, I did sales work for thirty years, and I have no trouble going up to somebody, I've gone up to more than one real estate agent's car door and stuck my laptop in my lap in their car, just to show them what we do. And so that's maybe the extreme end of it.

But if you're not willing to go out there and knock on doors then they're going to hire somebody who's got the skills of a salesperson. Because don't forget, you're dealing with sales people, and you've gotta sell them. In a lot of cases in the first years, they're saying, 'Why should I go with you? I've been dealing with the same person for the last three years and I'm happy with what they do, and leave it at that. And so you need to stay in their face, and keep telling them that you're still around, and in a lot of cases they want to know if you'll be there for a year or two before they switch over their business. If they're dealing with a large company that's been around for five or ten years, they're saying 'Well yeah, maybe you'll do a better job but maybe you won't be here next year. At least these guys will still be here.' So you've gotta go the extra mile. And to me, number one, you've gotta give them the service, like customer service, number one.

***DK:** So the way you got your first job was from approaching local real estate agents and showing them your work?*

**LG:** Absolutely. The first thing we did was, we'd do that. And the original samples that we had wasn't even our own work. Because we didn't have any yet. But the nice thing is that through RTV, they did have samples. We put our web site together and put their samples on, and their testimonials on, until we could replace them with our own, which we eventually did. But we had to start from somewhere.

If you're an individual and you're not associated with anybody, and you want to do this totally on your own, with no company of any sort, of any backing, it's going to be very difficult to get going until you can get yourself one or two clients, to at least be able to show somebody what you're doing. Now the first how we did, on top of theirs we did our own. Then at least we had something that wasn't belonging to RTV to put up and show them what we physically ourselves had done. And I think that's very important for people to see. We've diversified since doing virtual tours as well. We're the only company actually in Canada to offer the high definition tours in the full screen and how they look. And we've now added real estate web sites to our mix. I'm now studying search engine optimization so that I can offer that to clients who already have web sites so I can help them get their rankings up higher. We're not only a virtual tour company. We need to become a marketing company and help somebody market their listings. And that's what we do. But we try to do the best, to give them the best quality that we can.

***DK:** What level of acceptance is the concept of a virtual tour among real estate agents? Are they all getting on board now, or do some of them just say 'No, we just want photos'.*

**LG:** One of the things that everybody... We have an article on our web site. We hand out this information, that's 'What is a virtual tour?' I mean, I could speak to

ten different agents and if I go in and say, 'We offer high definition virtual tours.' 'Oh, I already got a virtual tour.' I've already been to their web site before I went to see them, and I say, 'Well I didn't see one on your web site'. They say 'Oh yeah it's there'. I say 'Well, that's a slide show,' and they say 'Ah, it's all the same.' You know. But it really isn't all the same. A slide show is not a virtual tour. Still pictures that are going from left to right is not a virtual tour. But their concept is that it is. And a 360 degree virtual tour is what it is. You're getting to see a whole room. But at the same time, they believe that it isn't. They're more accepting of virtual tours, and I think what's happening now with a downturning market in North America, there's more acceptance, only because the agent is looking for another way to be different from his competitor real estate agent, so that he can get the listing. But what they do now is they go in and they say 'Mr and Mrs Smith, not only do I do this, I have a web site, and we do virtual tours'. And the customer says, 'Oh, virtual tours, that's great'. But they haven't got a clue what they're getting. And I've had this discussion with my wife many times. How do we educate the public? Not the real estate agent, the public. On what a virtual tour is, and the difference between a lousy virtual tour and a good virtual tour. At this point, if I can figure out that, then I can probably become rich.

Because then the client will never accept a slide show as a virtual tour, or a virtual tour that's tiny and fuzzy and rounded walls. Because a house doesn't have rounded walls. So if we could figure that one out we would be way ahead of the game. And that's where I've got my mind working, but haven't figured that one out yet.

*DK: So how long would it take for somebody who's starting out to get good at creating the 360 degree panoramas?*

**LG:** Again, if you use a company like RTV you could probably learn to do a virtual tour in hours. It's like any craft. To learn to become good at anything you need to practice. If you learn how to do a 360 degree tour today, you could go out tomorrow and start marketing your business. Because, to be honest with you, 80% of real estate agents haven't got a clue what a good one or a bad one is, or doesn't really care. I don't know if you're taping or not taping, it doesn't matter to me, we had a client, a real estate agent who was giving us between 13 and 20 tours a month. And they never looked at our virtual tours. I only realized that by accident. I'd done two tours for them and mixed up the two tours with the address, and the client had looked at the tour and said, 'That's not my house!' So I got a call, it's the only time it's happened, and he says 'Len, these are mixed up.' So I fixed them. And I found out that they don't even look at the tours. And in the month of November I lost a client because he found what he considered a virtual tour for less money than I was charging. And when I had a meeting with him I couldn't match the price, and I wouldn't anyway because that's not helping my business.

But he said to me, 'The tour that I got for this much money is good enough for the client, for a perspective of what the house looks like'. So, you know, those type of things happen. And there's not a lot you can do. But you gotta decide if you want to be the best in your field, or you just want to go out and try to do something and make a few dollars. But to learn how to do it, you could learn how to do it in a day if you wanted to.

*DK: So will your methods and advice work in any area, for anybody?*

**LG:** I would think it would work anywhere, what we do and how we do it. It's going to be up to the individual to decide if they're prepared to put the time and the effort in. It's the same as any business. My dad, my late father had a saying. And he said to me one time, he said 'Len, I don't care if you're a garbage man. Just be the best garbage man, and you'll never be out of work.' And his advice is correct. The way we look at it is, we're not going to compromise our business and charge less money just to keep the guy's twenty tours. Believe me, I could use the business and the money. But I'm not going down to his standard, especially when there's no appreciation for what we do. Then, what's going to end up happening, is the next guy will come along and do it for less money, and he'll want us to come down again. I'm saying no. When we started in the business, we charged more money than our competitors. The reason being, is we felt we had a better tour. If somebody was going to recognize that the tour is better, are they prepared to spend a couple of dollars more? And we're finding that the real estate agents who are the top in their field are not complaining about spending the extra dollars for the top in our field. I don't know if you read any of the testimonials on our web site.

*DK: Yes.*

**LG:** OK. There was one from a client of a real estate agent, it wasn't even a real estate agent who gave us the testimonial of what we did. We know we're in the right direction, and we're not going to go backwards and offer tours for a lot less money because somebody else is. We feel that we'll eventually build our business and we'll be able to turn away clients. At this point we can't, and we travel wherever we need to go to do a tour. Tomorrow for example, we're doing a tour for one of our regular clients, and we're driving two hours to do the tour. So we're doing four hours of driving just to get the tour done, and we haven't even started the tour yet. But this is the type of customer service, and this is the type of client that we get. Those high end homes, and they'll continue using us because they love our tours, and they love what we do, and they love our service. And we don't mind doing it.

*DK: You touched on something there. Do you find that it's easier to sell your services to agents who specialize in high end homes?*

**LG:** Well, you do. The excuse you hear a lot from agents is 'The house is only \$200,000. It doesn't deserve a tour. It doesn't need a tour.'

**DK:** *It's just an ordinary house.*

**LG:** Exactly. But does the client not deserve the same amount of attention that the \$500,000 house gets? And that's where I talk about background, about being able to educate the client. Why does the \$200,000 house not deserve a tour, and only the \$500,000 house does? I mean, there's attributes and there's things about the \$200,000 house that will help sell that \$200,000, and we're not talking about a ton of money. I mean, as an example, an average tour is about \$150. So if for the \$200,000 house, the tour is \$150, and we go to do a \$500,000 house, and it's \$200 or \$250, is it not really the same thing?

**LG:** I mean, in the context of things, when these people are picking up in commission, on a \$200,000 house there's \$10,000, what's \$150? You put one ad in the newspaper, you're spending \$100 to \$150 for an ad in the newspaper that's thrown away, with one picture. So when somebody says that to me, it's hard for me not to argue with them.

**DK:** *Plus they're getting those other benefits about having the home shown to its best advantage 24 hours a day.*

**LG:** Exactly. Eighty percent of people do their search, start their search, and usually end their search, with the internet. People don't look at newspapers any more. If you take a look at the yellow pages, they're getting smaller every year, a lot of people aren't even printing yellow pages. There are newspapers that have stopped having real estate sections in the newspaper because the real estate agents aren't advertising any more, or as much, so as a result, paper is starting to go by the wayside. I bet you within no time you'll be getting 90 to 95% of people searching online for what they want – real estate or otherwise.

**DK:** *How much experience would a person need to make money from real estate photography?*

**LG:** Well, it's a different field than taking photos or portraits. You don't need a lot of experience to get started. That's not where it's at. I think the experience is more necessary in the areas that don't have anything to do with photography. I know our discussion should be on photography and such, but if you're not into sales and you're not into marketing, again, you could have the best product – there's people who have the best products in the world who have folded because they've had no marketing and no sales. And without that end of it, or somebody to lead you in the right direction with that end of it, you're going to go nowhere. You could have the best product... we knocked our heads against the wall for a long time. And I do



have the marketing and sales experience. Because if you are not good at rejection, then you're not going to be good in anything. Especially in photography. It's not your experience. There are some of the best photographers out there who are not making five cents. Whether it be real estate or otherwise. Because they don't know how to market themselves. And that's an important feature in anything that you're going to do in business.

*DK: So if you had one secret to give about creating virtual tours, what would it be?*

**LG:** If I had a secret then I wouldn't be a secret any more if I told you, would it?

*DK: Well, maybe one of your second level secrets.*

**LG:** Nah, I was only kidding about that. That's the one thing when I went through your questions that's still blank on my screen. Because there's really no secret to this business. The secret to creating virtual tours... you've gotta have a lot of different things that you've gotta put together. But if we're talking about the secret of how to make money with virtual tours, I would have to say you have to have a lot of patience and perseverance, because getting in the door is the hardest part. Creating the tours is probably going to be the easiest part. I think for us, customer service has been number one. And our attention to detail. The attention to detail is what sets us apart from the next guy. And if you look at some virtual tours, aside from the size of the tour, that makes ours crisper and cleaner and full screen. How many tours have you looked at where the laundry is all over the bed, or the bed's not made, or the real estate agent's purse is sitting on the counter. These types of things which attention to detail, a lot of people are not doing. And if we had to say the secret, it's that we do have attention to detail, which is probably one of the most important things – and the customer service.

**LG:** Karen? What would you say the secret is? Well, we talked about having a love of what you do. Karen said it's not just another house. You have to love what you do. You gotta love this kind of business, that this is what you want to do ... and you make it look the best you can. And that's what we try to do.

*DK: So when you say, it's not another house, you mean ... ?*

**LG:** Well, you know, I used to be in the car business. And somebody would come in and take a look at the really nice shiny red sports car. And they would drool all over it, and to me it was just another car. Because I see them every day. And I was selling them every day. Well, with real estate and houses, we can't take that approach. Every house is not, 'Oh, we're just going to do another virtual tour. We're going to go and collect a few dollars'. Because we love what we do, we're going to go in there and it's our business to make that house look as good as it can

be. Because we're dealing not only with a house, we're dealing with people's lives. And we want to help them do the best, and get the utmost out of that particular house. And when we're leaving, people will hug Karen, for all her advice and changing things around... we just did a house recently, this week actually. The lady's husband is probably not going to make it to Christmas, he's got cancer. And she's there and she's gotta sell this house. Well, we're not there just to take the pictures, we want to help these people sell their house. And it's an emotional thing as well. You don't get involved with people that way – that's part of what we do, and we don't treat a house as a house – we treat it as somebody's home.

*DK: So I imagine that could be difficult, to maintain that good perspective. How many tours would you do in a week?*

**LG:** Depending on the week.

*DK: What would be a busy week?*

**LG:** Well, a busy week would be 10 or 11 tours.

*DK: So you'd be doing a couple a day.*

**LG:** Yeah, we could do a couple a day. We've done four in a day. And we've gone four days without a tour. That happens. But you've gotta be ready. The other thing is, we're available to clients seven days a week. My business phone is on 24 hours a day. We've had calls on Sunday at 8:30, 9 o'clock in the evening from an agent, wanting to get a tour done, because they just finished listing the house. You know, we don't see ourselves taking a holiday! Because you can't shut the business down for two weeks, because they're listing houses. Sure, we have slower periods of time when we can take a day here or two days here, or whatever. But you really can't take the time off. If you're going to do this in real estate, it's different than anything else. If you're a photographer taking pictures of people, you can book your appointments, you can set your studio up, you have control over everything. But in real estate you don't have control. There's a couple of good books that... actually, there's a blog, and I'm just going to get it for you. This guy's pretty good and he deals with not so much virtual tours, but with his next book, e-book, that's coming out he's going to devote a couple of chapters to it. But if somebody wants to know about real estate, it's <http://photographyforrealestate.net/>. And this guy owns his business, and he reviews cameras, he reviews virtual tours. He's got a book called, 'An e-book on how to do real estate photography'. And he's got another e-book called 'How to start a real estate photography business', and a startup kit. And they're not expensive, and maybe not something that you want to gear people away from what you're doing, Denis, to send them there, but if you're talking about real estate, I'm just giving you and your students this place to go.

*DK: They sound good, I mean people have to start somewhere and you never want them to stop learning.*

**LG:** They're really good, unfortunately there's no affiliate program or I'd be in it. But I have bought his two books and the startup kit, and there's a lot of good information. And his blog is really good. Just for yourself even, you should sign up, it's free to subscribe to the blog. And you know there's a lot of good stuff on there to take a look at. That's what we tell them the tour bus as well. And this guy is involved with some virtual tours of his own which are a little different, and he reviews cameras, he reviews different things. It may be for some of your readers a little bit over their heads because he's into really professional stuff. But these two books I think, especially the one where you're learning about the photography, it's an e-book and it's not expensive, and it'll give somebody a lot of perspective of the business. I think he does have a couple of chapters now on virtual tours.

*DK: I'll definitely check that out.*

*DK: What might be some of the common problems that people experience?*

**LG:** In what respect?

*DK: Were there any technical or other problems that you might have come across in the early days before you got your system together?*

**LG:** What we did almost immediately, we went out and bought extra batteries. What we use now, is we use rechargeables that recharge in , we went out and bought extra batteries. What we use now, is we use rechargeables that recharge in 15 minutes. But we have at least two sets each for the flash. We've got three lithium ion batteries that came with the camera. We bought extras for the camera, because you can never have too many batteries. And it's very easy to run out of batteries. We also keep a point and shoot that Karen used to use, our Fuji, with us as well, in my bag in case something happens to the camera. You could drop your camera, what do you do then? I've got a second pano head that I keep with me all the time. Because it's possible that the tripod taking it out of the car when I put the head on, could slip off my bumper, fall down and break. Then what do I do? Especially if I'm two hours away, what am I going to do? I can't do the shoot, so I just wasted time for everybody. I'm always prepared. It's important to have all of your tools and be prepared with everything. And we're always making sure we have extra cards for the camera because they can screw up too. I've got two extra off-camera flashes that we used to use before we got the Nikons. They're always with us as well, because you never know what could happen. So technically, when we talk about technical things I talk about normally, if the camera for whatever reason, the processor dies or whatever, you and I are not going to be able to fix this. But if you have another camera at least you can keep going. It sounds silly,

but at the beginning we used to carry a checklist. I don't have it any more but the checklist was for: extra cards, extra batteries, extra batteries for the flash, the extra camera. We'd make sure when we left the house we hadn't forgotten anything. And be prepared if something does happen.

*DK: So you're thinking in advance what might go wrong, and do what you can to anticipate that and back yourself up.*

**LG:** You know, that's Murphy's Law. And if something's going to go wrong it will. I find that if you're prepared for that it won't go wrong, but if you weren't prepared for it... It's like, today we left the house and we were taking some flyers out to real estate agents' offices. And I said to Karen, 'Should we take the cameras with us?' We always keep the tripods and everything else in the car, but with this cool weather I don't leave the cameras in there anyway. And she said, 'Ah, what for?' And I said, 'If we don't take them we're going to get a call'. Or we won't get a call. So at least we're prepared. So we take our stuff with us wherever we go when we're out, so if somebody calls us we're ready to go. And if you need a tour done in half an hour, we're available, and we'll go and do it.

*DK: What sorts of things could somebody do to stay competitive in the field of real estate photography?*

**LG:** Well, what we've done is we've diversified. We don't just do real estate photography any more. We've had enough experience now, and feedback from our clients, to find out what they needed. I mentioned earlier that we're in the business of marketing. We're in the business of marketing real estate listings. That's what we do. So if we're doing that, what can we do to help our clients market their properties more effectively, more efficiently, better, less expensive tools that they can use to stay ahead in their field. Because if we stay ahead, and we keep them ahead, they end up listing more houses or selling more houses, they're going to never leave us. Whether prices go up or somebody offers them a less expensive product, we are unique. Nobody's doing what we're doing. So from doing virtual tours, and to be honest, with RTV we learned the basics, but in the first six months we only did seven tours. When we moved into high definition, in four months we did a hundred tours. So quite a big difference.

*DK: And how did you spread the word about that?*

**LG:** Well, we were already spreading the word. What I did, is I downloaded ... because our tours are downloadable onto CDs or computers, once we had done a few, actually the first four tours that we had and we went around to show people the tours, we hadn't done them. We had again, through the server and the company, we asked permission to use four of the tours that they already had. So we downloaded them, took off the names so that nobody would know where they

came from, I put them on my laptop, and I started going back into real estate offices. And they're like 'Oh, here he is again!' And I'd say, 'No, no. I'm here, but you gotta look at this. Just give me five minutes of your time. I'm not going to talk to you about anything, I'm not going to sell you anything. I just want to show you a tour that you've never seen before. And sometimes I'd get a yes, and sometimes I'd get a no. And if I'd get a yes I'd open up the laptop, which was already running, and it took a second and I'd show them the tour and let the tour speak for itself. I didn't have to talk when they saw what a full screen virtual tour looked like. And at that time it was wide screen but it wasn't totally full screen. We have only done full screen in the last couple of months when we switched over to the Flash viewer. And the nice thing about it, is I can go back to these clients who said no before or were on the fence, because now I have something else to show them. Oh, you were here before. Yeah, yeah but now it's full screen. Let me just show you, and I whip open the laptop and let them look at it. And what I do also is I try to get in to do presentations for offices when they have their real estate meetings. They're always looking for somebody to waste some time, so I've gotten in the door that way and done some presentations with the virtual tours. But I didn't stop at high def tours. And we're still improving those like I said, and they've been bugging me, the guys with the servers, to go full screen on the still photos, and they're also soon going to have the ability to add video to the tour as well. So we'll try to stay on the cutting edge in that respect. The second thing people have said, well how come the tour's not up yet? Well, you know the web master hasn't done it yet and so, what if we could offer you web sites that you could do yourself, and you're not at the mercy of a web master? Oh yeah, well how to we do that? Well, I'll get back to you. So I went out searching and I finally found what I was looking for. And now we have do-it-yourself web sites. They have a slide show on the web site which is not bad, it's better than somebody else's slide shows that you have to pay for, and they can do these tours by themselves, they don't have to know any programming or HTML, and we've got it for a really really good price. So we've got websites now. And now we're looking into some other things that we're adding to the mix as well. Like newsletters, if somebody wants real estate newsletters, I've become an affiliate of a guy in the states who offers stuff for real estate, so I'm offering that. At one time we were offering, we could put video on web sites. It was cheap and they can actually email videos of themselves, with links to virtual tours and stuff. It was ten buck a month, I couldn't get anybody to buy it. For my two dollars a month that I was going to make in commission, I thought it wasn't worth it, so I quietly took it off. Some things work, some things don't. But the whole idea here is that I'm still looking. Like I said, I know probably 95% more than the real estate agent knows about search engine optimization, and I build all my tours, all my web sites I build myself. I don't use HTML, I use 'what you see is what you get' editors, and they look quite nice, but I understand meta tags and key words and all these other things, so now what I'm doing is I'm going to take a course so that I can become professional at that, not just know more than

somebody else, but now I've got a piece of paper that says I know a bit more than anybody else. And Karen's taking a staging course so she can say, 'Yeah, I know how to do it, but now I got a piece of paper that says I now how to do it'. So we've added staging to the mix. We're going to add search engine optimization to the mix. So that we are the person they can come to for all their marketing needs. Today I spent forty minutes with one of my clients, showing her, actually his assistant, how to do some stuff on the internet and how to do some HTML stuff, and they were having some trouble with emails. I don't get paid for that stuff. That's good will. Who are they going to come to on their next virtual tour? They're not going to think about the next guy who's going to come in the door and offer it to them for half the money, because that's not what they're all about. It's what we're offering them on top of what we do. And that's, to me, the only way you're going to retain clients of any kind in any kind of business.

*DK: So you mentioned the do-it-yourself web sites that you're now offering. If somebody was interested in that, what's the address they would go to, or how would they find out about that?*

**LG:** Well, actually if they went to [customvirtualltours.ca](http://customvirtualltours.ca) there is a link to 'do-it-yourself web sites', or it's [customwebsites.ca](http://customwebsites.ca). And they're good anywhere in the world, not only in North America.

*DK: So in the last few minutes we've touched on a few information resources that you've mentioned for finding out more about real estate photography. Are there any other ones that you rely on or that you recommend?*

**LG:** No, that's basically at this point, all I've used. Just Photography Real Estate Blog, which is the one I mentioned to you, which has got the books. That would be good for somebody. Just off the top of my head, other than the resources I've given you, I can't think of any others at this point. But if somebody does a search... the only problem when you do a search for virtual tours, 90% of the time your going to get companies who do it, and there's not too much really good information out there because, even with this guy's Photography Real Estate Blog, he's into photography more than he's into three sixties. He's starting to acknowledge it, and starting to go the route, saying that there's a place for virtual tours, but there doesn't seem to be a lot of information that's good information out there for people to learn. And you just gotta do some searching and try to figure out what's going to work for you.

*DK: You mentioned a couple of courses, that you were taking a course and Karen was taking one. Where are those through?*

**LG:** Well, the one she's took was a staging course, and I don't have that handy. But there are quite a number. If somebody wanted to learn about home staging

there are quite a number of them. Actually there's one that's actually geared to photographers, real estate agents and I've got it here on my email.

*DK: Are those sort of organized through your local real estate agency organization?*

**LG:** No, these I found through the internet. This one's called the Accredited Home Staging Specialist. And if you go to <http://www.realtyuonline.com/> that's going to take you there.

This is a course that's a couple of hundred dollars, and it's Accredited Home Staging Specialist.

The one thing we liked about this course is it did teach you a lot, and you could use the designation. Oh, here it is, I think <http://www.ahsdesignation.com/> should take you straight to the site. That will take you there, and from there, there's a free report you can have on home staging. That'll take you to what you need to know, and the nice thing is that it's geared to real estate agents, brokers, assistants, home owners, staging professionals, interior designers and photographers.

And that would be the course for somebody who wanted to do staging.

Now as far as the SEO course, it's through a company that sells software that has a course. They have two courses, one's free and one's a paid course and I'm basically just starting to get into that, and I don't have it at my fingertips.

Any of that type of stuff, you know the net is such a big resource. The biggest problem is that you can get information overload and you've just gotta hope that you find the right one if you're going to buy something.

And this staging course, actually RealtyU, if you read through there you'll see what it's all about, and to me that was well worth it because she sounded like she knew what she was talking about. Karen didn't really need a course. The course was only for her to have a piece of paper that said she's an accredited home stager, so if somebody says, well, what gives you the right?

I've also got a course that I had for photography, to learn cameras, learn more about digital cameras. I haven't even had a chance to... a good course, a basic course for somebody that's new, that they'd learn a lot from, it's called STARE Online Photography School. And it's a downloadable book. It's not expensive. Just to give you an idea of some of the stuff in the book, color, perspective, the camera, picture building, lighting, advanced composition, photographic style, photojournalism, portfolio and promotion, and a day as a photographer. Just a course that you can take, you can get a diploma when you finish it, quite a good little book again.

But I've got so much, when I look through my computer I've got tons of stuff. It's a matter of having the time to read it and go through it. But for photography for real estate, if somebody was going to do that, I'd recommend the e-book at <http://photographyforrealestate.net/> and that'd probably be the first thing if somebody's interested in photography as a business, because he goes through the business and not so much technical as the business end of it.

*DK: OK, so if somebody wanted to do business with you, how should people get in touch with you?*

**LG:** Well, if they're interested in a web site they can just go to our website address, take a look at what it is and they can call our toll free number or email us.

*DK: And the website is <http://customvirtualtours.ca> is that right?*

**LG:** That's our virtual tour site, but they can reach us through there, or they can go to <http://customrewebsites.ca> if they're interested in a web site. The phone number is the same, and there's a different email, but either email's going to get to us anyway. Either [info@customvirtualtours.ca](mailto:info@customvirtualtours.ca) or [info@customrewebsites.ca](mailto:info@customrewebsites.ca)

*DK: OK, fantastic! Len Goldman, thank you so much for your time. You've been so generous with your knowledge and information, and I'm sure anybody who listens to this will get heaps out of it.*

**LG:** Well, I'm glad I was able to help, I hope it'll help you.