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SECTION: NEWS

## **Keller Williams Realty founder shares keys to success**

Gary Keller, the founder and chairman of **Keller Williams Realty International**, said he made many of the same mistakes that befall many young real estate agents early in their careers.

Those mistakes can mean setting goals that are too low, prompting a real estate agent's business to lack momentum. They can also mean failing to learn from mentors, who've already blazed the trail to success in the real estate market.

Keller, who is co-author of a book entitled *The Millionaire Real Estate Agent*, said he's now offering a detailed look at lessons learned in the real estate market and a guide to succeed. "People have lived before us and they've done great things. And you can learn from them," Keller said Wednesday on a stop in Oklahoma City. "So the reason we wrote the book was to say, we want to write the most documented and researched book ever written on how to succeed in real estate, and that's what we did."

"It's all about helping people maximize their success in real estate in some manner."

Keller, 45, was in the city to present a seminar to real estate agents intended to boost their prospects for a successful career in the real estate business. But he says the six-hour seminar, which delved into specific business models for real estate companies and marketing strategies, could apply to almost any business.

Key to any success, he says, are what he calls the three Ls of the real estate business, namely "Leads," "Listings" and "Leverage." Leads, he said, are by far one of the most important aspects of a business, because they are the starting point for any business generation.

Keller said real estate agents need to continue to build leads on business prospects, even when business is already booming. Often, agents in a busy month can let their lead-generating work slow and that will eventually prompt a pullback in productivity.

Listings, he said, are another key factor in business growth. The listings, and the marketing signs and advertising that promote those listings, generate new leads for an agent. At the same time, agents who focus on listings can make more efficient use of their time, and thus generate more business, than agents who focus primarily on representing buyers.

The third L -- Leverage -- simply reflects how well a real estate agent uses the resources at hand. A real estate agent who adds personnel to handle office work or other duties can manage time and business efficiency and expand the company.

More broadly, real estate agents and other business people simply do not think large enough and do not set long-term goals for how they will achieve their success, Keller said.

"Unless we are jolted and forced to look at the big picture and think big, we tend to look at smaller, more short-term pictures and goals and tend to think of things more in the present," he said. "If you can't imagine and plan for the possible, then for you, the possible is probably going to be impossible."

Early in his career, Keller said he realized he was not thinking big enough. He was not looking far enough into the future.

In an effort to "think bigger," Keller said he began to envision what he wanted his company to be. Later, he says in his book, he began answering the company telephone by saying "national office" even though the company had just two offices, both in Texas.

"I know this may have sounded brazen, but it was amazing how this simple act created incredible positive momentum, enthusiasm, and credibility for my long-term goals. There is no question that it contributed to our success," Keller says in his book.

Keller suggests that people who want to succeed take a moment to consider what long-term goals they would like to attain. He then said from there, a person should be able to consider the steps to reach that goal.

For Keller, the lessons learned in the business have led to sharp growth in his company.

Keller said he grossed \$1 million in sales by the time he was 25 years old. By the time he was in his mid to late 30s, he had netted \$1 million.

Keller, who with business partner Joe Williams formed Keller Williams in 1983 with only a handful of offices, said the company now has more than 270 offices nationwide and more than 17,000 agents. That number is expected to grow to 325 offices by the end of 2003 and to 500 within two years, he said.

"We believe we're definitely on a growth path, because we are definitely filling a need," he said.

The book published in February by Rellek Publishing Partners of Austin was co-written by Keller, Dave Jenks and Jay Papasan. Listed at \$20 and now in its second printing, the book has sold more than 29,000 copies, Keller said.

Keller said he and his associates are now working on a second book scheduled to be published in early 2004. The book, with the similar title of *The Millionaire Real Estate Investor*, will look at strategies used by the nation's top real estate investors.

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