

LIVING LIFE IN FULL COLOR:

# STEVEN FINKELSTEIN

By **Melissa Griegel**  
Photos by **Melissa Griegel Photography**

**Meeting Steven Finkelstein, you can't help but smile. With his colorful shirts and bright personality, he exudes happiness. His home reflects his affinity for color. The floors, mantles, walls, and shelves are filled with colorful paintings, sculptures, collections, flowers, and rugs. I felt like I stepped into a museum. "I like to surround myself with things that bring me joy. Bright colors and art make you feel good."**

Two French Bulldogs also take up residence in the home. Dracula is all black with bat ears, and well, looks like Dracula. Lucifer is white, and as Steven says of the mischievous dog, "He is living up to his name." Steven's backyard used to consist of one large, overgrown tree. Putting his gardening skills

to use, the backyard is awash in color with annuals and perennials, outdoor seating, and a cabana replete with a painting that looks suspiciously like his pup Dracula.

Steven L. Finkelstein, a Brooklyn native, now resides in Teaneck and works in the famed Russo building in Teaneck as a Broker Associate for Russo Real Estate. This is a new venture for Steven, who started his real estate career in 2016. He is no stranger to sales though. He completed the Macy's Executive Training Program and was a sales executive in the watch and jewelry industry, working for national and international companies such as Movado Watch, Citizen Watch, Macy's, Erwin Pearl, and Napier. He was in Buying/Management at Macy's with large retail and wholesale accounts. With over 30 million dollars in wholesale volume, Steven gained experience in marketing, team building, training, and managing people. All these skills come in handy as a Broker Associate.

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His national and international business travel instilled a sense of enjoyment in experiencing new places. He loves trying new restaurants and doing Scotch tasting during his travels. A fan of Johnnie Walker Blue Label, he also likes to explore new tastes and brands. Favorite places to travel include Hawaii, the Panama Canal, Paris, and Provincetown, Massachusetts. Traveling up through the locks in the Panama Canal was an experience he will never forget. “It was really interesting to see the mechanics of how that all works,” he says. “Vacations are for recharging the batteries. I love cruises. It really gives you a chance to get away from everything. I will still conduct business, but due to limited phone service, I have a chance to unwind a little more.”

As a result of a declining retail economy, especially in the jewelry and watch market, Steven entered

the second chapter of his career. “Everyone needs a home. A watch or a piece of jewelry—not so much.” He always had an interest in architecture and enjoys homeownership. Friends suggested he try real estate. On a whim, he casually walked into Russo Real Estate and met Lydia Russo. Even though he had no connections to the industry, Lydia took the time to talk with him.

“She was so gracious, so giving of her time. She encouraged me to get my license. She had such a passion for the business,” he remembers. “Six or eight months later, license in hand, I walked up the steps of the Russo building. There was a note on the door that Lydia had passed away two weeks prior. Her son greeted me and took me on in the office. Her spirit still guides me. She is my guardian angel.” He enjoys being part of an office that has served the community for over 50 years.



Starting all over in a new career, building a business from the bottom up, is not easy. And Steven admits he was facing some big obstacles—he is not originally from Teaneck, does not have any kids in the school system, his temple in is NYC, and he didn’t have any local affiliations. Steven has been able to overcome all of these stumbling blocks, as evidenced by his quick growth and climbing sales. His business is 50/50 listings/buyers and he is targeted to sell over \$12.0 million in volume this year. He received the Circle of Excellence designation year one with a bronze award. Year two he just missed silver, which he attained in year three. In his fourth year, he was just shy of gold, so that is a target for year five or six. He was also the recipient of The Greater Bergen Board of REALTORS® “Rising Star Award” 2018/2019 after only two years in the business. Steven has a Broker Associate License and the special designations of Seniors Real Estate Specialist® (SRES) and Seller Representative Specialist® (SRS).

“Unlike the current team trends, I am a professional/entrepreneur who is hands-on with the client from the beginning to the end of

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the transaction,” says Steven of his business model. “This is personalized service from beginning to end. An important part is the ability to cultivate long-time relationships, provide guidance, and provide the resources for every step along the way. You need to be dedicated to making each transaction successful. The transaction is never over until it is. The challenge is getting to the finish line on a most difficult transaction.”

Steven does whatever he needs to get the job done. “Being a Broker Associate, you have to wear many hats: Therapist, Contractor, Designer, Negotiator, Financier, Liaison, Marketer, and Mediator are just a few. I enjoy sharing in the milestones of people’s lives. There is satisfaction in matching people’s needs and lifestyles to a home.”

One of his specialties is working with the senior population. “I am trained to understand the special dynamics and needs of seniors as they enter into the sale of their home and/or look for their next place to live.” Steven has a relationship with the Senior Source of Hackensack. He does monthly presentations and lectures there on a variety of topics that are of interest to seniors. He has brought in special guests such as radio personalities and has sponsored senior health fairs. His community service extends to others in the community as well. Steven participates in community Thanksgiving meals, feeding the homeless, packing lunches and snacks for students, and holiday gift wrapping in the mall. Steven belongs to several professional organizations including the Teaneck Chamber of Commerce.

When asked what makes him stand out, Steven says, “I do what I say and say what I do. I answer my phone I treat people with respect. I



am honest, loyal, trustworthy, and am there for the long haul. I genuinely want to help. I know what good customer service is. Good follow-through and strong negotiation skills help, along with the fact that I speak Spanish.”

Steven doesn’t shy away from challenges. He sold his first million-dollar home during COVID on FaceTime with an out-of-town buyer. The client made a donation in his honor to Steven’s house of worship. Some clients have invited him back to their homes after they renovated.

Always in motion, Steven’s mottos are “You Can’t Strike a Moving Target,” Work Hard; Play Hard,” and “Exceeding Expectations”—something Steven always aims to achieve.

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