

REAL ESTATE

EXECUTIVE

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A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

A man in a light-colored suit stands in a professional office setting. He is smiling and has his arms crossed. Behind him is a large, dark wood desk with a computer monitor displaying the REALM logo. On the desk, there are framed photos and a small Eiffel Tower figurine. The office has large windows with blinds on the left and a potted plant on the right.

**Eric Reed — REALM
Real Estate
Professionals**

A Whole New Realm

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A Whole New Realm

By Woodie Stephenson

Eric Reed, President of REALM Real Estate Professionals, is ushering in a whole new era of possibilities and advancements for the company his parents, Neil and Anita Reed, founded less than a decade ago. Not only is Eric changing the way agents can access information, but he is improving the way real estate transactions are mediated through the use of technology systems and state-of-the-art, custom-designed tools. Priding himself in service, Eric shares his knowledge of technology with those around him while building a superior REALM where business is faster, easier and better.

Originally born in East Ridge, TN, but moved to Houston with his family while just 9 months old, Eric, the youngest of three siblings, was a youthful entrepreneur in every sense of the word. Inspired by his parents' motivation to create their own unique business opportunities, Eric has always been one to think outside the box as long as his family can remember. At just 6 years of age, Eric recalls asking to speak to the manager of the Randall's meat market after seeing a sale display for live crawfish at his local grocery store.

"Knowing I could catch the crawfish in a nearby bayou, I asked the store manager how much he paid for them thinking I could make a deal with him," Eric says.

Unfortunately for the young opportunist, he learned that there were certain regulations that forbid catching crawfish out of the

Eric Reed is the person behind one of the most advanced technology-based real estate companies in the industry.

—John McCormick, StarTex Title

backwater bayous; however, Eric's mother, having inquired of the store manager about the conversation, discovered the entrepreneurial spirit in her son.

"I came home one afternoon and Eric was on the phone," Anita recalls. "This was when he was about 5 or 6 years old. The manager was very nice and told him he appreciated Eric calling him, but he explained that they had to buy their supplies from a federally regulated supplier. I really appreciated the fact that the gentleman took the time to speak with him and explain it to him without chewing him out or just hanging up the phone. Through the years there are a lot of entrepreneur stories about Eric, but that was always my favorite."

It wasn't long, however, before Eric found his first real money-making opportunity. While in middle school, Eric studied and learned a routine of illusions and tricks that earned him \$100 an hour performing magic shows at children's parties. By the time he was in high school, Eric was already experimenting with loans and credit,

although still technically too young to apply for his own charge account. To his parent's surprise, they received a call from Tommy Vaughn Ford asking permission to grant their son a \$1,500 loan.

"It seemed straightforward to me," Eric remembers. "I needed the money to improve my car with some modifications, so I just walked into the dealership and explained my situation to the manager and told him I was good for the money."

While most kids his age were still trying to figure out how to land their first summer job, Eric was already experimenting with such facets of the business world; however, the young go-getter was not immune to hard work as he spent time sacking groceries and working in a restaurant to get valuable experience in a work environment.

After graduating high school, Eric dreamed of writing commercials and began studying

Previous cover honorees, Anita and Neil Reed are extremely proud to have Eric featured on the cover of REE magazine and are quick to recognize his contributions to The REALM Company. Eric represents the best attributes of both of his parents.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL ORTEGA



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Eric feels very fortunate to have a dynamic team of real estate professionals working with him.

marketing and advertising at Sam Houston State University. Facing the realization that writing for advertising firms is an esoteric profession hard to break into, Eric found a more viable alternative after receiving a class assignment to design a website. While most of his classmates designed a simple one-page outline, Eric impressed his peers and professor when he created a multipage site with various links and features. Realizing he was on to something cutting edge and potentially profitable, Eric's professor pulled him aside to discuss the implications of his new talent.

"Everyone wanted to know how I put this robust site together," Eric recalls. "All I did was read a couple of tutorials. For me, it doesn't matter whether I know what I'm doing or not, I'll take on a challenge regardless."

Armed with new insight and direction, Eric began trimming his class load in favor of designing websites. Before long, the enthusiastic designer recruited a handful of friends to help with the sites and took an office in the Executive Suites on Post Oak. The new team quickly began approaching restaurant and bar owners to sell them the still-novel idea of a website.

As website opportunities for small businesses began to fade out, Eric concentrated his efforts on taking his code and design experience into the job market. The need for designers familiar with ASP software, which enable businesses to change websites and data on the fly, landed Eric his next big gig. Although Eric didn't technically know how to use ASP, it didn't stop him from getting a well-paying position with

The systems Eric has contributed have made it very easy for agents to receive great broker support and trouble-free processing. Eric's parents, Neil and Anita, had a vision when they founded REALM and because of Eric, REALM is where it is today.

—Shah Haleem, Shah and Maggie Haleem Team, REALM Professionals

Williams Communications. Eric remembers using his positive attitude and personality to sell himself despite his lack of experience.

"In the interview at Williams, they asked me if I was familiar with ASP. Although I did not know how to use ASP just yet, I was familiar with the language. I took the position and learned as I went along."

After Williams, Eric moved to a start-up e-commerce company where he was able to gain valuable knowledge on how to integrate advanced sales systems. Although the company lacked the proper marketing to thrive, consequently ending up bankrupt, Eric gained insight that would benefit him in the future. Eric's next move was to Holland Chemicals International, where he used his experience in programming and design for two years before a career change that would lead him into his current position.



Eric's "loves" of his life are his beautiful wife, Amy, and his twin daughters, Kenzington and Keeli.

"Every time I left a job, I always found a better circumstance," Eric says. "Eventually, I realized I was born to sell and decided to give real estate a try."

For Eric, however, real estate was not just a lighthearted venture but a solid opportunity to contribute to the family business — a recently opened, 100% concept office established by his mother and father, REALM Professionals. Founded in 1999, the family-owned REALM had experienced tremendous growth. In less than five years, REALM had grown from a handful of agents in a small office to 270-plus agents, a boom that Eric, having joined as agent number 80, sought to increase with his technical expertise.

Shortly after his career change, Eric married the love of his life, Amy, after proposing to her atop the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Amy was also heavily involved in the real estate title industry, allowing Eric to gain even more insight into that aspect of real estate transactions.

Although they have always encouraged Eric to follow his own instincts, Neil and Anita could not have been happier that their son had chosen to try the family business.

"We were elated," Neil says, "but didn't think he would stay long as we never pushed any of our children to do real estate if they didn't want to do it. Little did we know how well he would do and that he is a natural with sales and technology. Real estate brings those two things together."

It wasn't long after joining the family business that Eric began to notice certain frustrations about real estate that he believed he could fix through

Eric possesses energy for the real estate industry and approaches each task with enthusiasm. Although his business is growing at a rapid pace and could easily consume each hour of the day, he maintains balance and stays focused on family.

—Kristin Thrasher, Champions School of Real Estate

the use of custom-designed software and integrated systems.

"I immediately recognized two problematic areas of the job that could be overcome with the proper tools," Eric says. "First, it's difficult for agents to keep everything straight while handling multiple transactions, and secondly, agents are plagued with an immense amount of busy work due to an inefficient system of communication and organization."

Determined to improve his family's company as well as his new profession, Eric used his programming background to develop a set of user-friendly tools to aid REALM agents in their transactions, research and communication.

"Since I possessed a programming background, why not build the tools to make my job easier?" Eric recalls thinking, "As a result, agents liked using the tools I gave them and we developed a reputation at REALM for being *the* technology company."

The tools Eric has given his agents are gradually becoming a high-tech, all-in-one package to aid Realtors on every side of their transactions. The software package, Agent Extra, which is being developed with the help of an expanded development team, is only months from becoming available to agents outside of REALM offices. Agent Extra will offer an array of state-of-the-art features that enable agents to access CRM systems, transaction tracking systems, and easy-to-use reporting software able to demonstrate market growth. The package will also aid agents with collaborative features for inspectors, insurance, mortgage lending and title companies. While many seasoned Realtors are reluctant to embrace potentially complicated new technology, Eric advises them not to worry — Agent Extra promises to only make their job easier.

"I encourage our agents not to be afraid of the technology we have at REALM," Eric says. "Learning to use Agent Extra is really an easy process, not to mention the software is there to help you out."

Shah Haleem, one of REALM's top producers, understands why the technology systems Eric has put in place have helped REALM to prosper.

"Eric is very helpful," Shah says. "The systems that he has contributed have made it very easy for agents to receive great broker support and trouble-free processing. Eric's mother and father, Neil and Anita, had a vision when they founded REALM and because of Eric, REALM is where it is today."

John McCormick and Marilyn Smith of StarTex Title value the technology assets Eric has brought to their collaborations.

"Eric Reed is the person behind one of the most advanced technology-based real estate companies in the industry," McCormick says.

"He's not only cute, he is also smart," Smith adds.

Lloyd Hampton, a longtime friend and associate of the Reeds, believes the innovations Eric is introducing will make him a leader in his industry.

"Eric has been instrumental in putting together one of the most dynamic real estate organizations operating today," Lloyd says. "Eric excels in staying on top of — and ahead of — the myriad technological developments in the industry. He has developed a broad base in both real estate sales and financing. I anticipate that Eric will establish

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—Eric Reed

himself as a leader in the real estate industry.”

While Eric's parents have reaped the success of their son's improvements to the family business, the young President of REALM feels that he owes much to his parents' encouragement, guidance and wisdom. Quite often Eric is told by coworkers and friends of the family that he possesses the best qualities of his parents.

“I've learned so much about business and character from my parents,” Eric shares. “They taught me that you can always do the right thing or the quick thing in business, but the quick buck goes fast. My father also taught me to minimize your partners in order to avoid conflict. Most of all, my mother and father have always told me that whatever it is I wanted to do, that I could do it. I've learned through them to make the best of whatever life brings. Even when things are bad, it's important to take them in stride.”

Now, working as partners, the Reed family is able to help one another stay true to their company motto: “Good People Doing the Right Thing.”

“I've always seen my parents be fair,” Eric says. “Now that we are able to work together and make decisions as a family and a team, we keep each other in check. Being objective is not always easy, but it's our biggest goal.”

Although each member of the family team has their own principal area of expertise, the Reed clan makes business decisions together in family conferences. However, these meetings are not held in traditional boardrooms; instead they have a good, down-home family feel to them as they often discuss important day-to-day decisions over a home-cooked meal or lunch at their favorite neighborhood café.

Despite the enormous responsibility that comes with running a growing company, each member of the Reed family prides themselves in customer service and takes care of their own distinct portfolio of clientele. Eric enjoys working with people first and foremost over computers and has experienced his own tremendous success listing and selling property. When still new to real estate, Eric struggled to find the right balance while multitasking for his company.

“When I first arrived at REALM there was so much I wanted to achieve,” Eric says. “I was trying to sell houses during the day and work on the technology at night. I eventually found a balance and began achieving success in both areas.”

Kristin Thrasher, Regional Director of Champions School of Real Estate, admires Eric's enthusiasm and finesse. She believes he pos-



PHOTO COURTESY OF REED FAMILY

Eric and Amy enjoy traveling and spending time together. They are seen here during a recent trip to San Francisco.

sesses an extraordinary talent at balancing the various tasks he faces as President of the fast-growing REALM.

“Eric possesses energy for the real estate industry and approaches each task with enthusiasm,” Kristin says. “Whether it is for his company or a networking event, he is professional, open to change and ready to accept a new challenge. Although his business is growing at a rapid pace and could easily consume each hour of the day, he maintains balance and stays focused on family. Eric is a remarkable person, and I consider it a pleasure to know and work with the entire Reed family.”

Working alongside the Reed family is a truly exceptional experience for their team of over 700 agents. While Eric functions as REALM's President and manages the office's technology, Anita works with strategic partners and takes charge of creative advertising. Neil, meanwhile, watches the books. Those Realtors fortunate enough to call the family-run office home are not only set up with the tools for success, but they also experience a family atmosphere at REALM that defies the boundaries of race, religion and nationality.

“I always say that we are one big family that speaks 34 languages,” Neil, Eric's father, says.

Business is booming for REALM. Recently Eric helped negotiate the first-ever REALM franchise location in Austin, TX. With the Agent Extra systems, Eric set up at the new franchise office, the Austin team is experiencing exciting growth.

Anita believes Eric is directly responsible for much of the tremendous growth that REALM has experienced since his advancements.

“Agents who join our team bring other agents in to see the things that we offer for free,” Anita says. “The time-saving features that Eric has implemented are the biggest reason agents choose to join our family. His knowledge of real estate sales and his technology skills save everyone time and money. Eric's contributions are one of the biggest assets to the growth of the company.”

One agent while interviewing with the company noted, “You guys are like *The Jetsons* while everyone else is like *The Flintstones*.”



The group in this photo with Eric and Amy represent just a fraction of the ever-growing REALM“Family.”

Eric credits much of his company’s growth to the supportive staff, programming team and family atmosphere of the office.

“Unlike some offices, agents really enjoy helping one another at REALM,” Eric says. “There is a friendly atmosphere all around, and when someone is new, our agents go out of their way to help them understand the technology systems. At REALM, we will continue to build the tools to increase our agents’ success.”

Although still young, compared to many veterans of his industry, Eric has had the opportunity to learn much about what creates success in his business.

“Don’t treat real estate like a side job,” Eric shares. “Treat it like a business. Set aside certain days for certain tasks like marketing or showing houses, and then use those days to their full potential. Most importantly, don’t be afraid to ask for help in this business — you’d be surprised how many people want to help you.”

Eric’s other sister, Cheryl, and her husband, Phil, operate a software company and currently live in Bedford, England, ready to help if and when REALM goes international.

The future looks bright for REALM Professionals. Eric has no plan to stop improving and designing systems to advance real estate transactions and help agents utilize their time and resources. With the launch of Agent Extra in the real estate market and new offices in Sugar Land and Pearland, the Reeds can count on an exciting year full of the massive growth that their business has experienced all along. Bringing in the best people and technology is a natural talent for Eric and is the key to REALM’s remarkable success. There’s no telling what the future will hold for the real estate industry, but for Eric Reed every day is another step into a whole new realm. ■

During their free time, Eric and his wife, Amy, both enjoy bath time with the newest additions to the Reed family — their twin daughters Kenzington and Keeli, who will celebrate their first birthday on June 20, 2007. The couple recently visited San Francisco for a nice getaway and time to reflect on the company’s success. Eric’s sister, Lisa, a current native of Colorado, has plans to bring her strong experience in training to the family business; Anita, Neil and Eric could not be more excited to have Lisa come aboard.



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