91 YEAR LOVE AFFAIR WITH...

DIY WITH ALUMINUM FOIL

PLAYING DRESS UP

HEAT UP THE WINTER WITH HEARTY MEALS

TORONTO RISING STAR TAKES ON THE WORLD
Canada’s newest and youngest rising star, Johnny Orlando, at age 16 has made his name through social media with 5.7 million followers on Instagram. This past November, Johnny was the opening act at the Hudson’s Bay Christmas windows unveiling with headliner Carly Rae Jepsen.

When 8-year-old Johnny and his 13-year-old sister Darian were looking for something to do around the house one Christmas holiday, Darian suggested they make a music video. After all, Johnny liked music and could sing, and she’d been studying YouTube for hours in order to figure out how to put together a video and edit it.

“We had nothing to do,” recalls Johnny, “so Darian suggested we just have some fun doing a song!”

The video, which featured a cover of Justin Bieber’s “Mistletoe,” was then uploaded. At the time, their parents, Meredith and Dale, wondered if it was a good idea, but both figured no one but friends and relatives would see it, so it wasn’t worth worrying about.

Not too much happened at first, but the two of them kept at it. This first video would be the start of an amazing story about building a huge online following through social media and then breaking into the music business. Before long, Johnny and Darian created videos for original songs titled “Summertime,” “Replay,” and “Never Give Up.”

Johnny is adamant about the choice to make a career out of music. “My day always had music playing in the house and I enjoyed it, but doing music was never a thought through my mind,” he says, however, his timing was particularly good. While he and Darian were making their early videos, a 15-year-old pop star, singer/rapper from Atlanta, Georgia known as MattyB had quickly become an Internet superstar. By 2013, MattyB had millions of YouTube subscribers, he’d appeared on many of the world’s biggest venues and been interviewed across network television. MattyB represented every would-be R&B star’s dream.

Growing Up with Music

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“The Fan Base Began to Grow

Over the next few years, Johnny rose to fame on YouTube and social media, amassing millions of followers across his channels. As singer/songwriter, he also received a 2018 Kids’ Choice Awards nomination for Favorite Musical YouTube Creator and one in 2017 for Favorite Viral Music Artist. Then just last spring, Johnny signed an exclusive deal with Universal Music Canada, and through a division of Universal, released a new single, a duet with 13-year-old American actress and social media star Mackenzie Ziegler.

TAKING JOHNNY’S MUSIC TO CANADIANS AND THE WORLD

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...continues on page 7
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An Exclusive Deal and More Tours
Once he began to gain attention, Darian also began touring in order to promote his music, including a sold-out North American Tour in 2017 with friend and collaborator Mackenzie Ziegler (know by many in her role on Dance Moms).

Johnny's success was noticed in the music industry. Jeffrey Remedios, president and CEO of Universal Music Canada, says Johnny's home grown fan base is what first caught his attention. When Johnny signed an exclusive deal with Universal to produce his first EP (extended play album), Remedios wrote in the press release, "He’s just 15, but since the impressively young age of 8, Johnny has been shaping global culture and inspiring millions with his incredible musical talent. Together, from our shared home base in Toronto, we’ll take Johnny and his music to Canadians and to the world.”

Following the universal deal, Johnny headed out for a tour across Europe this past summer, including a trip to Poland.

From Toronto to LA and LA to Toronto
The last few years have meant that Johnny is a frequent flyer to Los Angeles. For example, for much of the last year and a half he’s been busy with the development and recording of his first solo EP. “The mastering of all the songs was completed this January,” Johnny reports. A release date will be announced in February, and then a tour date, which will include a performance in Toronto.

Last fall, however, Johnny was able to return to school and continue his studies while working on his career. Although he grew up in the Burlington Area, Johnny now attends high school in Vaughan. His school makes accommodations for his travel schedule, including online lessons when he’s out of town and a flexible exam schedule. Johnny still plays hockey on the school team but had to give up sports like soccer and football.

A True Family Business
Johnny’s career is truly a family business, although now that Johnny has signed with a major label, Johnny has “people” to help with his career. Still, however, a family member always travels with him, and in addition to writing songs, Darian (now a student at Ryerson) continues to help in the business by managing social media accounts, etc.

What He’s Learned
"YouTube gave me a chance," Johnny says. "Social media is a great tool to allow young artists and young creators of any kind to express themselves, to get content out there," he says.

He’s also learned that the entertainment business can be very competitive, with real stage moms, and challenging situations. He recalls, for example, a few years ago when he wasn’t always included in someone’s Instagram post because he didn’t have “enough” followers. “People need to chill!” he says.

Final words from one of Canada’s newest (and youngest) rising star? “Treat people how you would like to be treated yourself!”
Why We Love the Oscars
On Oscar Night, millions of people around the world tune in for the finale of the year’s awards season. Whether or not our favourites are nominated, or win, the truth is that many of us will stay glued to the television screen starting from the red carpet cover and ending close to midnight; and the next day, we’ll be online reading about the morning-after fashion analysis.

So why exactly are we so drawn to the Oscars? Even those who aren’t really movie buffs find themselves pulled into the show year after year, talking about it with their friends and colleagues at work, even attending local “Oscar” parties and participating in Oscar contests to guess the winners.

We Love Celebs!
According to Dr. Stuart Fischoff, editor of the Journal of Media Psychology, most of us are drawn to “alpha” males and females, whether they are royalty, heroes or movie celebrities. “These are people who we pay attention to because, in one way or another, they influence our lives,” he says. “How they dress, how they speak, what they like, what roles they play – they are profoundly influential. These people are really so much a part of our cultural layers of who is important and who is less important.”

We Love a Good Story
But there is more to it as well. Movies draw us into a world of story and imagination, which as human beings, we’ve loved since childhood. When you read a book to a small child they usually ask, “again, read it again.” In the same way, we go to the movie theatre to watch stories about love, war, space travel, competition, politics, and never tire of what are often similar plots and characters.

We Can Escape for 2 Hours
Movies also help us escape. We get so wrapped up in a movie, we almost forget that it’s not real. How many times have you gone to a movie with a lot on your mind, and then afterwards, realized you had forgotten about everything except what was going on via the screen? This kind of escapism is good for us.

We Become the Characters
Through the magic of movies, the audience starts to believe the actors are the same as the roles they play, and identify with their struggles. We imagine what it must have been like to experience the success of Queen, or feel the loneliness of Don in The Green Book. By going through the same circumstances in movie time, we gain greater empathy for the fictional characters, and in doing so, gain a better understanding of each other as humans.

Movies these days also reinforce our values, because the characters on screen often act like we do. Perhaps this is why we get so upset when “our” movie doesn’t win, or get nominated!

We Connect with Each Other
Finally, win or lose, the Academy Awards is a yearly tradition that gives us a chance to connect with those around us. Through conversations, debates and shared messages, we get to participate in a large-scale communal event and connect with others while we watch, cheer, jeer and laugh.
Social media creates an ability to connect and engage with the rest of the world that’s never existed in before. Our favourite apps are a wonderful way to stay connected with people, your friends and your family, whether they live on the next block or on the other side of the world. It’s now more than possible for a person to have a network of friends that’s truly global, breaking down geographical, cultural and social barriers and building friendships across the planet.

But being a friend takes a variety of different forms. Some are contacts from work or those you’ve met through other people (still listed as friends or followers). Others are actual friends you want to stay connected with on a more personal level.

Being “Heartfelt”

“Heart-felt” is defined as sincere, warm, genuine, and deeply felt. February is a time when many celebrate relationships by connecting in a warm, “heart-felt” manner. Connecting with others in this way has the dual effect of making both people feel less alone. True human connection has the power to deepen the moment, inspire change and build trust. In fact, the ability to bounce back from stressful situations is actually strengthened when others reach out and give you verbal or written support.

Reach Out and Connect with Someone

Look at your network of contacts, followers, friends, and ask yourself, who do you want to connect with this month in a “heart-felt” way? It is wonderful if this can be done in person or on the telephone, but that is not always possible. When you reach out in a meaningful way, even a note or email can make a big difference.

• Is there someone you haven’t been in touch with for a long time, and perhaps you might want to pick up the phone and call, or send an actual letter?
• Is there someone who might appreciate a phone call, just to see how they are doing, or catch up with their latest news?
• Do you have a fun memory that you can share with someone? e.g. Remember when we all had dinner together and the restaurant ran out of French fries?
• Is there a group you know who used to do activities together (perhaps hockey moms, or college friends) and you suggest a reunion?
• Is there someone who is alone and would love a visit or an invitation to go out for coffee or lunch?
• Is there someone who would appreciate a card just to say, “I’m thinking of you”?
• Is there a photo or video you have that you’d love to share with someone who would recognize the occasion and love a reminder of the time you spent together?

Cool Winter, Warm Hearts

How many Facebook friends do you have? How many Instagram followers? How many people are in your contact list?

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During the winter months, many of us feel more like sitting around and watching television instead of going for a run! But despite a natural tendency in winter to slow down, staying active is essential for our health and our state of mind.

The first step, what do you like to do outdoors? For some, it might be skating or skiing, or snowboarding. For others, it might be a quiet hike in a wooded trail or exploring your neighbourhood by foot. Pick something that you actually enjoy doing outdoors and you are more likely to add it to your plans for the week.

GET THE RIGHT GEAR: Winter activities need the right equipment. If you are going to go walking, sneakers won't work when it's cold and wet! Get yourself proper boots that keep your feet warm and are good for hiking. The same applies to sports. Skates or ski boots that don't fit or make your feet cold can turn you off of the activity. There are many second hand and sports-swap shops in the city. Equip yourself well.

WEAR THE BEST CLOTHES: The same goes for outdoor clothes. Toronto winters sometimes require clothes to withstand cold temperatures and strong winds. Other times, our winter days can be wet and slushy. Dress in layers and pick what you need so you are comfortable.

EVENINGS CAN BE FUN TOO: Don’t limit yourself to day time. You may need to add an extra layer of clothing, but there are some great activities that can be even more fun at night, like skating on an outdoor rink.

GET ACTIVE INDOORS: Okay, so you really don’t want to go out in the weather, or the ice is making conditions dangerous. Indoor shopping malls are great places to get walking exercise, especially if you don’t have access to a club or sports facility. Walk around a local art gallery, or explore the many downtown “paths” underneath the city (around King and Bay).

There also are many indoor activities at your local recreational facility, such as badminton, tennis, squash, and of course, swimming. Schedule in at least a day a week and when you’re running around in your t-shirt or swimming, pretend it is summer once again!

DANCE LIKE NOBODY’S WATCHING: Use music videos or put on your own tunes, and dance your way to being more active.

DRINK UP AND MOISTURIZE: Winter is far worse on your skin than summer. Stay hydrated by drinking water, even if you are not thirsty. A thermos of tea is a great idea.

Remember to wear a heavier moisturizer in winter, and don’t forget the sunscreen. Your hair also needs a good conditioner.

CREATE A HOME GYM: Set up an area in your home as an exercise corner. It may be as simple as a place where you put a workout mat and some weights, or maybe you invest in some exercise equipment. And whether you are at home or in your workplace, everyone can spend a few minutes climbing up and down the stairs for an intense and efficient workout.
PLAYING DRESS-UP
HOW TO DRESS FOR A FORMAL EVENT

Receiving an invitation to a formal event can make you feel like Cinderella... until you have to figure out what to wear. No need to panic. Here’s how to interpret formal for men and women so you can feel like royalty but still feel comfortable with your own style.

Black tie is often requested for an evening wedding reception, a gala charity event, a formal business party, an awards ceremony, etc. Men are expected to wear tuxedos and women customarily wear long gowns.

“ Formal” is not as specific. It means just a dark suit, tie and white shirt for men, long or short fancy dresses for women. Relax, however. Most black tie events these days really mean “formal”. If in doubt, check with the organizers.

BLACK ALWAYS WORKS
You can’t go wrong with black (dress or suit) at a formal occasion. When your dress is black, and especially it is long, it always says “formal”. Men also can’t go wrong with a dark (black or navy) suit, white shirt and dark tie.

SHINE AND TEXTURE
Choose fabrics that “shimmer”, like silk and satin, or those rich with texture such as velvet.

ACCESSORIES
Yes, shoes matter, but you don’t have to choose stilettos. Just no sneakers or hiking boots. Also avoid carrying a heavy purse. Find (or borrow) a “clutch” bag to hold a few essentials, such as your phone! If your dress is sleeveless, you’re best to bring a dark jacket or shawl in case the air conditioning is on high.

FOR WOMEN:
• You actually have more choices than just a dress: Chic separates like a long or short skirt and fancy top/blouse
• Formal jumpsuit
• Wide leg pants and fancy top (think Julia Roberts at the Golden Globes)
• Formal pant suit or female “tux”

ADD SOME SPARKLE
Go ahead and wear some sparkle but don’t overdo it to the point of tacky. This is the time for classic elegance.
• Add a bit of sparkle through some dangling earrings, a necklace or bracelet, shoes and/or your clutch
• Men, add a single piece of jewellery, ideally something in a shiny metal

FORMAL “ON-A-BUDGET”
Getting dressed up doesn’t have to cost a lot!
• Most people have a few formal items in their closets, and are happy to lend them to you.
• Visit your local second hand shop. You’ll be amazed at the selection of slightly used formal wear. If you can’t find a dress, pick up a long black skirt and just invest in a fancy top.
• Various places in Toronto rent “frons” at much, much less than the cost to buy.
Nutritious and Easy
Stewing or roasting vegetables, or meat and vegetables together, in one pot comes with many benefits:

- The vitamins and goodness in the various ingredients all remain in your meal, instead of being boiled off in steam or water.
- The flavors mix together in marvellous ways, particularly when you add your favourite herbs.
- The ingredients cook at different rates so you get smooth sauces or gravy in addition to varying textures.

**Classic Beef Stew**

1. 1 to 2 lbs. of beef stew meat (decide for yourself how much meat you want), cut into 1-inch cubes.
2. 1 to 2 tablespoons canola oil
3. 1-1/2 cups chopped onions
4. 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained
5. 1 cup of beef broth, or ½ cup broth and ½ cup red wine
6. 1 garlic clove, minced
7. 1 tablespoon dried parsley flakes
8. 1 teaspoon salt
9. 1/4 teaspoon pepper
10. 1 bay leaf
11. 6 medium carrots, cut into 2-inch pieces
12. 3 medium potatoes, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces, or 8-10 mini potatoes, unpeeled
13. 1 cup sliced celery (1-inch lengths)

**Add additional vegetables:**

- Brussels Sprouts
- Diced Squash or sweet potatoes
- Sliced Parsnips
- Broccoli (larger pieces)
- Add 1 tsp. Rosemary for additional flavour.

**Vegetarian Option**
Stews and meals work just as well without meat.

**Directions**

1. In an oven-safe Dutch oven, brown beef in batches in oil; drain. Return all meat to the pan. Add the rest of the ingredients. Bring to a boil.
2. Cover stew and bake at 350° for 2 hours. Check after an hour to see if more liquid is needed.
3. Once out of the oven, taste and add additional salt or spices.
4. Discard bay leaf.
5. Mash some of the vegetables to thicken the liquid.

**For Pan Meals**
Instead of placing the above items in a pot, place on a large pan, sprinkled with cooking oil such as olive oil. Roast at 350° until everything is browned and well cooked. Stir occasionally to distribute items.
Got a project you need done around the house? Perhaps a shelf that needs building, some plumbing repairs, or just a thorough cleaning? Often, working on a project or getting to work scrubbing a kitchen can be a good way to relax, even work off some stress. But there are other times when it might make sense to ask, “Is this something I really want to do myself?”

Time is one of our most precious commodities. If we have a skill that pays by the hour, time actually does turn into income! But aside from monetary value, time is what we give to others when we spend time with them. Time is also what we give ourselves when we need some self-care, or just to indulge in something we love rather than scrubbing or repairing.

So next time you are looking at a DIY project or task, consider the following:

• What is your time and attention worth? If you have to spend hours doing something that could be spent doing something of more value in your life (e.g. visiting a friend, attending a child’s hockey game, getting some physical exercise), then maybe it makes more sense to hire someone else to do it.

• Are you really the best person to be doing this job? Maybe you are really good at doing plumbing (and you enjoy it), but if this is not the case, your DIY efforts could end up costing even more. We’ve all seen TV shows where someone tries to “fix” a pipe and ends up flooding the room.

• There are lots of people who actually need income from part time work. It could be someone who can only work part time, or perhaps a student. You aren’t throwing money away, but helping someone out.

• You can’t be everywhere at once. One wise person calculated that parents have about 940 Saturdays from the time their child is born and the day they turn 18. How are you going to spend those Saturdays?

Perhaps the best question to start with is an estimate of the time involved, sometimes, that means figuring out what you can and can’t do. If you can commit a couple of hours to a project before you set it aside, then perhaps it is worth doing it yourself. But if it starts to drag into the next day and the results aren’t what you had hoped, time to call in the experts and give yourself a break!
It may have been your mother, girlfriend, sister or even teacher, whomever it was, we all have had special women inspire us. In this edition of Beaches, we are saluting the strong women in film, both the actresses and the characters they portray.

The Color Purple (1985)
Dir. Steven Spielberg; Danny Glover, Whoopi Goldberg, Oprah Winfrey

Thelma & Louise (1991)
Dir. Ridley Scott; Susan Sarandon, Geena Davis, Harvey Keitel


Dir. Mike Newell; Julia Roberts, Kirsten Dunst, Julia Stiles


The Devil Wears Prada (2006) Dir. David Frankel; Anne Hathaway, Meryl Streep, Adrian Grenier


The Hunger Games (2012) Dir. Gary Ross; Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson, Liam Hemsworth

Big Eyes (2014) Dir. Tim Burton; Amy Adams, Christoph Waltz, Danny Huston

Carol (2015) Dir. Todd Haynes; Cate Blanchett, Rooney Mara, Sarah Paulson

PLAY ONLINE TO WIN:
Participate in our annual Beaches Oscar® challenge for your chance to win a pair of movie passes to Alliance Cinema in the Beach.

How to play: Go through the following list of nominees and predict the winners. Follow the link to beachesliving.ca/oscar and fill in your picks by February 24, 8pm. The winner will be the one with the most correct predictions. Good Luck!

Best Picture:
- Black Panther
- BlacKkKlansman
- Bohemian Rhapsody
- The Favourite
- Green Book
- Roma
- A Star Is Born
- Vice

Best Director:
- Spike Lee, BlacKkKlansman
- Pawel Pawlikowski, Cold War
- Yorgos Lanthimos, The Favourite
- Alfonso Cuarón, Roma
- Adam McKay, Vice

Best Actress:
- Yalitza Aparicio, Roma
- Glenn Close, The Wife
- Olivia Colman, The Favourite
- Lady Gaga, A Star Is Born
- Melissa McCarthy, Can You Ever Forgive Me?

Best Actor:
- Christian Bale, Vice
- Bradley Cooper, A Star Is Born
- Willem Dafoe, At Eternity’s Gate
- Rami Malek, Bohemian Rhapsody
- Viggo Mortensen, Green Book

Best Foreign Language Film:
- Capernaum (Lebanon)
- Cold War (Poland)
- Never Look Away (Germany)
- Roma (Mexico)
- Shoplifters (Japan)

Best Animated Film:
- Incredibles 2
- Ralph Breaks the Internet
- Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse
- Isle of Dogs
- Mirai

Tell us who you think should win if you were handing out the awards.

BEST PICTURE  BEST FOREIGN FILM
BEST ACTOR  BEST ACTRESS

Your choices are not limited to the official nominations.

All entries will be entered into a draw for a pair of movie passes to Alliance Cinema in the Beach.

Submit your predictions to beachesliving.ca/oscar for a chance to win!
Contest closes February 24, 8pm.
Sometimes the lowliest products around the house are the most useful, especially when you’re in need of something and need to invent a solution. Just look at all these great ideas for aluminum foil. Keep a roll handy!

- Need a funnel or pastry bag? Shape foil into a cone.
- Wrap warm baked goods in a napkin and place a layer of aluminum foil underneath. The foil reflects the heat and keep your bread warm.
- Line a pan with a sheet of aluminum foil, fill it with cold water, and add two teaspoons of salt. Drop your tarnished silverware into the solution, let it sit for two to three minutes, then rinse off and dry.
- Store freshly cleaned silverware on top of a sheet of aluminum foil to deter tarnishing.
- Crumple up a handful of aluminum foil and use it to scrub your pots.
- Disguise small flaws on a mirror’s reflective surface by putting a piece of aluminum foil, shiny side facing out, on the back of the glass.
- Sharpen scissors by cutting several times into several layers of foil.
- To slide big pieces of furniture over a smooth floor, place small pieces of aluminum foil under the legs.
- Wrap the arms of your glasses in foil to protect them when you colour your hair.
- To get rid of starch stuck on your iron, run your hot iron over a piece of aluminum foil.
- Mix strips of aluminum foil in with your garden to keep hungry insects and slugs away from vegetables.
- Wrap the tree trunks with a double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil in late fall.
- Put a piece of aluminum foil under your ironing board cover. The foil will reflect the heat back through the clothing, smoothing wrinkles quicker.
- Keep messy drips off the bottom of the oven by laying a sheet or two of aluminum foil over the rack below.
- Make a disposable drip pan for your BBQ out of a couple of layers of heavy-duty aluminum foil.
- The next time you use your barbecue, crumple up the foil and use it to easily scrub off the burned food before you start cooking.
- Brighten up the electrical lighting in your backyard or campsite by making a foil reflector to put behind the light.
- Place a piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil under your sleeping bag to insulate against moisture.
- Wrap your kitchen matches in aluminum foil to keep them from getting damp on camping trips.
- Wrap some aluminum foil around a fishhook to make a lure. Fringe the foil so that it covers the hook and wiggles invitingly when you reel in the line.
- Line a metal paint roller pan with aluminum foil to make clean up easier.
- When you’re painting a door, aluminum foil is great for wrapping doorknobs to keep paint off them.
- For sparkling chrome on your appliances, strollers, golf club shafts, crumple up a handful of aluminum foil with the shiny side out and apply some elbow grease. If you rub real hard, the foil will even remove rust spots.
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Staying Ahead with Tech

Part 1: Augmented Reality

Every year, thousands participate in the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES), and thousands more write and talk about the latest trends in technology equipment and gadgets. This year, the Las Vegas show featured hundreds of presentations from exhibitors on what's to come in tech in the foreseeable, and at times, somewhat distant future. Over the next three editions of BeachesLive, we will be highlighting:

- Augmented Reality
- 5G Speed
- Smart Homes Get Smarter

Augmented Reality (AR)
AR is the technology that overlays information and virtual objects on real-world scenes in real-time. It uses the existing environment and adds information to it to make an artificial environment. The NFL has been using it since 1998, adding down lines that move down the field as the play continues.

Here are some other useful AR applications:

AR to Help You Remodel

Ever bought furniture and discovered it didn't fit once it was delivered? IKEA has an app that will help you avoid that in the future. It allows you to scan your room and design the space by placing IKEA objects in the digital image of your room to create a new environment with the new products.

There are also paint visualiser apps that help you try out different shades of paint for your room before you buy. Just use your smartphone camera to scan your room and virtually paint it with any colour.

Picking Your Best Look

Cosmetic company Sephora uses AR to allow customers to try out different looks and colours right on your own digital face.

AR in Healthcare

There are some exciting applications for AR in healthcare from allowing medical students to train in AR environments to telemedicine options that enable medical professionals to interact with patients. In critical situations, augmented reality applications can deliver real-time information to the treatment area to support diagnosis, surgery and treatment plans. Surgeons can plan procedures before making the first cut, models can be made of tumors, and AR diagnostic tools can model disease conditions. Deloitte Research asserts that AR will disrupt the business model and operations of healthcare.

From gaming to construction to AR in browsers that provide detail for what the camera displays, augmented reality apps are being developed at a rapid pace to enhance many industries. As additional ideas get developed, we can expect augmented reality applications to touch many more aspects of our lives.
Many find themselves spending more time indoors during the winter. What better time than to take on a home project. You could set aside a few hours on Saturday, or stretch the project out for a week or two. Depending on time and budget, here are some ideas for a room refresh that gives your home, and yourself, a refresh!

**EASY UPDATE**
A room or space in your home can take on a new look simply by updating or switching out some of the accessories. Set a budget and have some fun!
• Buy something new that introduces a different colour or a fresher look: bath towels and shower curtain for a bathroom; a set of tea towels, pot holders, and placemats for a kitchen; a couple of new toss pillows and throw blanket for a family room.
• Replace a picture on the wall with something different.
• Remove all the extra “décor” (knick-knacks, figurines, mementos) and then just put back one or two favourites.
• Replace a lampshade or a scatter rug in an entrance way or hall.
• Change your duvet cover and pillow shams in a bedroom.
• Re-arrange the furniture, ask yourself, is there one piece I don’t need?
• Add a vase of fresh flowers.

**MID-SIZE REDECORATE**
This might take a couple of days because you’ll have a bit of work to do at home, and then some shopping to finish the job.
• Repaint one wall a new colour, or use some of the new peel and stick wallpaper for an entirely new look
• Remove, or replace, a floor rug.
• Using a staple gun, replace the fabric on a couple of side chairs (pick chairs that have seats that can easily be removed, covered and replaced.
• Create (or re-do) a photo wall using frames that are all the same design.
• Repurpose an area to create a sitting nook, or a small office space, or a place to exercise. This may require a new piece of furniture, or switching a piece from another area of your home.

**A BIG RE-DO**
These are projects that may take a month, beginning to end, but have big impact in terms of making a change in your home.
• Replace a bathroom or kitchen countertop with one in quartz or granite.
• Remove a wall-to-wall rug and just go with polished floors.
• Re-do the lighting: what lamps need to be added/removed? Is there an overhead light that is too bright? Are there areas that need direct lighting?
• Repaint the room in a new colour.
• Re-do the window coverings, e.g. switch to blinds instead of curtains, or change the fabric on the curtains.
• Add moulding to walls, and cornices.
• Re-finish, or repaint, 1 or 2 pieces of worn furniture.
• Ask yourself, is there something I can remove, such as an inside door, or replace a couple of kitchen cabinet doors with glass doors.
When you run a small business, you might think your most important “secret ingredient” is your products, or your location, or even the sign outside your business. These are all important, but when you think about it carefully, your true secret ingredient is your staff. You may have the best product in the city, but you need great people to sell it, and you need great people to keep your business running smoothly, whether it means doing accounts or delivering a shipment of goods.

Now, once you have great employees, you want to keep them! This can be a challenge to small businesses because of the cost and the temptation for staff to leave for what seems like a better job. So here are some tips from the experts on how to keep your best employees, so they continue to make your business the best!

1. Express appreciation. Too often, difficult employees are the ones who get all the attention! Make sure that staff who show up every day and do great work without causing any trouble know that they are appreciated. Send thank you emails or texts, and take time to walk up to them in person and say thank you. A simple “great job” is usually all it takes! Don’t wait until the end of the year or their performance review. Do it immediately after they’ve done something well.

2. Recognize achievements. In addition to informal appreciation, set up recognition programs, e.g. employee of the month. As well, recognize personal achievements: birthday greetings, a gift card on their company “anniversary date”; and personal achievements: birthday greetings, a gift employee of the month. As well, recognize seasonal events with staff celebrations. Consider non-monetary benefits such as a flexible work schedule, a day off for their birthday, training days, or a chance to visit a trade show.

3. Connect one-on-one: Relationships matter. Mingle with staff during lunch breaks in order to get to know them beyond their “work persona”. You don’t want to be always hanging around, but you do want staff to know that you understand their job, how they work, what they do. Remember, everyone likes to be heard. Listen when they make suggestions and resist the urge to make judgement.

4. Be on their side when it matters. The customer may be “always right” but no one should be subject to harsh words or bullying. Recently, we witnessed an unhappy customer complaining in a loud voice to a receptionist. Fortunately, the boss overheard and came out to defend his staff. Well done!

5. Set up a creative workplace. Your competitors may be able to offer higher pay, but employee satisfaction almost always wins out or wages. Consider non-monetary benefits such as a flexible work schedule, a day off for their birthday, training days, or a chance to visit a trade show.

6. Hire right. It goes without say, hire right in the first place. Take your time and check references by asking direct questions such as, “would you hire this person again?” Picking the right person is the first step to having great employees!

Christi Johnson, owner of Still Images, has been part of the photo business literally all her life.

She grew up in a tiny mining town of Tumbler Ridge in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, where her father, a geologist and photographer, also ran the local framing service. She then worked at her mother’s photo lab in Calgary, and after she moved to Toronto to study special effects make-up for movies, continued to work in the industry until she moved into property management.

In her heart, however, working in a downtown corporate environment wasn’t what she liked best. After travelling around the world for 3 months, Christi moved to the Beaches where she rented an apartment, and then leased the space where Still Images is now located (a shop that used to sell posters). Today, she lives close by in Riverdale.

“The first 8 months of any new business is very, very tough,” she says, “In December 2014, I had sunk every penny into Still Images, and at one point, even had to give up my apartment and sleep on a friend’s couch to make ends meet. But I was willing to give up everything to keep the shop going. I knew that I would survive.”

A break came when Blacks Photography closed all its stores in the spring of 2015. In a generous move, at a difficult time, the owners of the Beaches Blacks let Christi put up posters redirecting customers to Still Images. The passport photo business she picked up kept the store going while Christi built its reputation in other areas.

“I always wanted to say thank you to Blacks”, Christi recalls, “and it happened recently. The daughter of the woman who owns Blacks in Canada came into my shop to get some prints and I told her the story. Their kindness saved my life.”

Four years later, the store is on its way to being what Christi hopes is an iconic service in the city for professional photo finishing and custom framing. Although customers are welcome to come to the store to create inexpensive prints in minutes at one of their Kodak photo kiosks, Still Images is much more than just traditional photo lab.

“We are 100 percent about service,” says Christi, “One of us here will help you select the right photo, crop, colour adjust, whatever you need, and ensure your choice is printed on quality paper that lasts forever, or a finish of your choice. We make it perfect for you!”

Christi explains that although inexpensive “cheap and cheerful” prints are convenient, there is no comparison in quality between thermal printing used online or at the photo kiosks, and the professional Epson printer used for quality printing. “These prints never fade, they last forever, and we can make the finished product as small as a locket or as large as a wall!”

In addition to Christi, staff at Still Images include Jacquie, Christi’s long time friend from the photo industry, Phayce, and two Beaches neighbours, Leah, and Mila, a university student. Visitors to the store also may have met the new “customer service queen” at Still Images, Christi’s 9-month old daughter Maple.

It is not uncommon to see hugs and tender moments between staff and customers. Helping people select the right family photo, a photo for a gift, or perhaps, a tribute for a funeral service, builds strong connections.

“I’ve been in this business all my life,” says Christi, “And those of us who know it, understand what a privilege it is to be part of someone’s life when they are sharing their photos with you. It is a fantastic way to learn about people and about the world. And people return because they have a relationship with us.”
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Johnny Catch – 1681 Lakeshore Blvd. E.
New Skin Laser Clinic – 2234 Queen St. E.

Thank you and best wishes:
Beach Glo Tanning – 1938 Queen St. E.
Boba Bubble Tea – 1918 Queen St. E.
Coffee Time – Coxwell Ave. & Gerrard St. E.
Nesters – 2211 Queen St. E.
The Gastro Pub – 1987 Queen St. E.
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