

# David Chilton

David Chilton was 26-years-old when he sat down in his basement and hand-wrote a book about financial planning. The ex-stockbroker didn't draw a single chart; there were no graphs, and very few numbers. There were also no doomsday projections, just a fictional barber named Roy who dispensed financial advice to three young wise-cracking characters. Chilton called it *The Wealthy Barber* and published the book himself in 1989. These are the humble beginnings of a 200-page humorous story that eventually became one of Canada's bestselling books, with sales of more than 1.5 million copies.



Photo courtesy of David Chilton

The book turned Chilton into a wealthy writer and his blunt, humorous style of dispensing financial advice led to a parallel career in public speaking. Chilton also hosted two PBS specials in the United States where his performance was described as “charming, unpretentious and funny.” These days Chilton is president of the Waterloo-based Crazy Plates Inc., a company that sells low-fat meal kits. The kits are part of his collaboration with bestselling cookbook authors Janet and Greta Podleski. Chilton helped them publish *Looneyspoons* in 1996 and *Crazy Plates: Low-Fat Food So Good You'll Swear It's Bad For You* in 1999, with combined sales of one million copies.

Recently, Chilton broadened his public-speaking interests. He has shifted from a personal finance focus, to one that examines how to maintain a positive outlook in all aspects of life. “When you look around the rest of the world and if you look back through history you realize we're the luckiest people going to live in Canada at this time,” he said.

Chilton's interest in finance started early at the age of fifteen when his grandmother gave him \$1,000 to invest. He bought silver, and lost his investment almost immediately. The sting of that loss caused him to study financial planning, reading about four or five books every week. At the time, the most popular financial planning books were those that predicted financial disasters. “But the problem with those doomsday books,” Chilton joked once, “is that the authors have successfully predicted 18 of the last two recessions.”

David Chilton went on to more formal studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, from which he received an Honorary Doctor of Letters degree in 2007. While studying economics at the University, Chilton started a small financial business. He became a stockbroker, and in 1985 won the prestigious H. L. Gassard Memorial Award for getting the highest score in the country on the Canadian Securities Course. By the time he wrote the exam he had read hundreds of personal finance books.

It was his experience as a stockbroker, however, that prompted him to write *The Wealthy Barber*. He became disenchanted with the investment industry and discovered that he liked talking to regular people. Chilton's first book was actually an outgrowth of his original plans to design a financial management course. He actually thought up the idea of using a fictional character named Roy while watching an episode of *Cheers*. His folksy approach to personal finance appealed to millions of readers.

As *Maclean's* once wrote, “. . . 30 years from now Chilton could be best remembered not as a best-selling author but as the man who inspired thousands to save their way to prosperity.”

*Photo courtesy of David Chilton*