

Interview with Ali Velshi

Sameera Gokal: What motivated you to get into business news?

Ali Velshi: I should really have a better answer for this, but I've repeated the real answer so many times I would get in trouble for changing my story. Basically, I was a General Assignment reporter in a world with a growing demand for business coverage. I was offered the chance (By CITY TV in Toronto) to train into business news, in which I had always had an interest. The clincher? They said I wouldn't have to work nights and weekends, since business operated during business hours. Let's just say they lied.

SG: Why do you think there is such an interest in business news?

AV: There hasn't always been. People spend more time choosing a dentist they'll see a couple of times a year than they do on saving for retirement or making investment choices. But over the last decade, stock bubbles, booms, recessions and scandal have made people pay closer attention. Also, it has become easier to be a "do-it-yourself" investor and take control of your finances, largely due to the internet.

SG: Why should people tune into your show, "CNN Newsroom" or "Your Money"?

AV: To get smarter. The point of everything I do on TV, whether in general news (Newsroom, M-F 1-3p ET) or Your Money (Sat 1p/Sun 3p ET) is to expose my viewers to ideas, trends and explanations of the world around them. My shows are for people who lead busy lives and don't have time to research details that don't fit into those busy lives. So my team and I make that process easier.

SG: How do you choose your wardrobe for on-air shows?

AV: My wardrobe often reflects how strong I feel on a given morning. If I am well-rested and feeling good, I will have a striped suit, a boldly-striped shirt and a patterned tie. If I slept very little, I will be more subdued. But never dull. My suits are all three pieces, and my shirts have french cuffs so I can wear cufflinks.

SG: Please tell us a little about your released book, *Gimme My Money Back: Your Guide to Beating the Financial Crisis*. Why did you decide to release it and how will consumers benefit from your book?

AV: The book was one of the first books released after the worst of the financial crisis in 2008. I work in a very interactive way with my viewers/readers/listeners, meaning I take phone calls, emails, tweets and Facebook messages. What I was hearing was that my viewers really lacked an understanding of what was going on around them. So I wrote the book basically as a "guide book" to the markets. Basically, it was a way to understand what was happening, and to start building, or re-building, wealth after the financial crisis.

SG: What is one thing that people may not know about you?

AV: That I love adventure travel (Mt. Kilimanjaro, deserts of Namibia, 4x4 trips), and that I ride a phat motorcycle.

SG: What are your likes and dislikes?

AV: I'm not all that complex. Food, reading and travel (even though I live between 3 cities and am on three of four flights a week.). I dislike fancy restaurants; I like comfort food, anything that can be delivered, and anything that can be consumed in front of the television.

SG: What is one of your favorite hobby?

AV: I don't tend to have much spare time. But, if I do, I really enjoy a long motorcycle ride. I think it's happened about once a year.

SG: What is your favorite movie?

AV: Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps, because I am in it! Actually, I LOVE movies, and I love going to them. I don't have a lot of down time so sometimes I see movies when I am traveling. Recently, I have really loved Avatar and MegaMind.

SG: What is your favorite food?

AV: Favorite food is anything spicy. Love Indian, Chinese, Thai. But I can always find time for pizza.

SG: What advice would you give young journalists?

AV: Don't dig in about format. The world of journalism is changing and it's all about being digital. One journalist does what 5 did a decade ago. You need internships, and many of them don't pay. It's not an easy profession to break into. It's exciting, fun and rewarding, but it takes hard work.