

of cash. Rob used his credit to purchase underpriced minerals and then resold these minerals to other collectors for profit.

Rob realized he needed to build a reputation, and he'd have to start buying and selling more expensive minerals to do it. Rob rolled all his profits into acquiring finer specimens. He moved from dealing \$5 and \$10 rocks to buying and selling \$100 specimens. Soon, with heart-racing anticipation, he was able to make his first \$500 purchase. When Rob took his birthday and bar mitzvah money and bought his first \$1,000 rock, a stunning fluorite from Illinois, his mother promptly escorted him back to the car to return it. Rob's full-hearted plea won the day. His mother let him keep the fluorite. Rob eventually sold that fluorite for a nice profit too.

When Rob enrolled in university, he was still a small-sized mineral dealer. Nevertheless, he found his own way to grow his business. A new form of communication called email had become popular with math and science nerds, and it was connecting people all across the globe. Rob set up an email list for every dealer and collector he knew. He began introducing buyers and sellers and taking a finder's fee from their transactions. It wasn't long before Rob started taking online orders to fill himself. His email mineral business began to flourish.

While the rest of the industry still believed physical displays were the only way to showcase minerals, Rob was busily setting up one of the very first websites in the mineral trade. He listed specimens with pictures, direct to ship anywhere in the world. Orders came in slowly at first but then with more frequency.

While Rob worked on his PhD in molecular biology, his mineral business kept growing, becoming large enough to pay for his education. An important decision quickly approached. With his first son soon to be born, Rob faced a choice. He could either begin a career in biology or continue his mineral business. He examined each path closely. The evidence all pointed in one direction. Rob received his diploma and became a full-time mineral dealer.

Year after year, Rob's reputation grew along with his online business. But Rob had a dream he was still far from fulfilling. He wanted to take rare mineral collecting mainstream. To accomplish this, Rob knew the industry needed to be legitimized. He would need to help reframe its reputation away from being a niche hobby. So, Rob studied the world of high-end art.

Modeling the art industry, Rob built relationships with museums and began curating exhibitions. Rob set up national symposiums and brought in speakers from around the world. He opened up major international markets, importing the finest specimens in the world from places like Brazil and China. Rob partnered with auction houses like Heritage Auctions, to showcase fine minerals to an audience of high-end collectors. In all these things he was successful.

Today, Rob has a vast network of rare mineral collectors of all ages, nationalities, and genders. Rob's dream of elevating fine mineral collecting is being realized. Rob has left a trail, like breadcrumbs, for his colleagues to follow. Many of them have done so; as a result, the mineral industry continues to get bigger and bigger.