

# O'DONNELL THE NEIL LETTER

A monthly publication devoted to providing friends and clients with insight and knowledge of the real estate world based on three core pillars of my business; Philanthropy, Business and Growth.

## I HATE CHRISTMAS.... OR AT LEAST I USED TO.

*This month's letter is going to be a little different from the others I have done. I want to cover a few things. I want to talk about our core business principles: Philanthropy, Business and Growth, through stories that I hope will be interesting, and maybe a little entertaining or even inspiring.*

### PHILANTHROPY:

#### I HATE CHRISTMAS...OR AT LEAST I USED TO.

For the longest time, I hated Christmas. To be honest, there are still aspects that I can't stand about Christmas, and in large part it is due to our society, and the materialistic "me, me, me" nature of it that bugs me.

When I was 16 years old I was working at Canadian Tire and I was in charge of the Christmas toy aisle which, as a kid, was really kind of cool. I had been at Canadian Tire long enough to know how to set up the aisle with the proper merchandising displays, so it was really fun. I got to see all the new Lego sets, the remote-control cars and trucks, the new video games, and I thought about all the really cool stuff I could ask my parents for. See, here is the issue that is still around today, and I think it's getting worse. It is the attitude of so many people that is focused on "me". What can other people do for me? How can I get them to help me? Who can I use to further my goals? The reason why people are like that is that they are trying to keep up with the Joneses,



or they are trying to present an image of themselves to the world to prove they are successful or important, or they truly believe that to be successful is to have all these 'things' to be happy. I learned at 16 years old, working in Canadian Tire in that Christmas aisle, what the real problem is that we face as a society, and what the real meaning of Christmas is. Let me take a few moments and tell you the story.

From Thanksgiving on, I would spend a couple evenings after school and weekends working at Canadian Tire. Normally I would be helping customers, stocking shelves, building displays and updating the sale items. I really liked helping people, and I enjoyed helping people at Christmas most of all. One evening I was working away in my oh so stylish red polyester-cotton blend Canadian Tire shirt and blue pants and I was replenishing some of the Lego sets and building a display of GT racers, when I noticed a young couple with their daughter who I am guessing was 5 or 6 years old. She had picked up a doll and you could see that she absolutely loved it. She quickly ran over to where her mommy and daddy were looking at other toys with her little brother. She showed the doll to her parents and asked if she could get it for Christmas. What happened next was burned into my soul, and I will never forget as long as I live.

As a parent, you want to provide for your kids everything you can, but sometimes you know you just can't. Growing up, my parents made sure that my sister and I had good food, good clothes and made sure that we had presents to open on

Christmas morning. However, we never had the big brand name stuff, or the latest cool toy-we just couldn't afford it. I know my parents wanted to give us those things they just couldn't, and I know that hurt them on some level.

As the little girl handed the doll to her mom, the father looked at the price tag of the doll, \$89.99, and he knew they couldn't afford it. The father looked at the mother and a silent conversation was had between them, in that moment, that said they couldn't afford it and they both knew it. The mother looked down at her daughter who was looking up with those huge eyes that little kids have, and she said "Well, I don't know. You will need to ask Santa for it and maybe, just maybe, he may bring it on Christmas morning. Now, go put it back on the shelf please." As the little girl turned around and went to put the doll back on the shelf, a look of profound sadness passed between the mother and father as they knew they could never afford that doll for their daughter. Their shoulders slumped forward ever so slightly, and their heads bowed as they felt the weight of the season become ever so much more.

***I felt as if I was hit by a truck. It was the realization that this is what my parents, and what so many other parents, have to go through at Christmas that hit me. It was at that moment that I hated Christmas. I hated all of it. The merchandising, the pushing of the 'best gift' or the 'gift that they will remember forever'. Anything to do with Christmas just made me sick. All I could think of was this young couple, and that look of sadness as they couldn't get the doll for their daughter, and how angry I was that this is what our "me first" society is doing to us.***

It has taken me a long time to be able to enjoy the holiday season, but what made me come around was the realization that it was not up to our society or other people to change for me to enjoy the real wonder of Christmas, but for me to change. If I didn't want to see that look of despair in another young mother or father's face, then I would need to be the one to make a difference in peoples' lives, people like that young couple from



the toy aisle in Canadian Tire. That is why the first founding principle of our business model, (Philanthropy, Business and Growth,) is Philanthropy.

Now, I'm not going to get into 'the real meaning of Christmas' because there are enough movies and stories floating around to cover that. However, the purpose of this story is to give you some more background about me, and why I want to talk to you about the launch of the NIAGARA IMPACT CLUB.

In the new year, we will be sending you information about the NIAGARA IMPACT CLUB, and how you can participate and make some real impact in our community. Here is the basic premise. Once per quarter we meet. We connect. We have a drink. We solve problems, to positively impact lives in Niagara. At each quarterly meeting, three nominated non-profit organizations are selected to give a presentation. Based on their presentation, each member votes. The organization with the most votes receives a \$100 cheque from each member of the Impact Club. We are targeting to have 100 members but more are welcome. (100 members x \$100 = \$10,000 of donation/impact per quarter equates to \$40,000 per year). You become a philanthropy venture capitalist. Which ever way you look at this, there is no better way that each of us, with a small amount, can make a huge impact directly in our community. Not overseas, not to some group who will waste the money, but to our community.

In our business, we want to do all we can to make an impact in our community but we can't do it alone. Who is with us? If you like getting together and meeting other good people, have a drink and are the type of person who wants to make a difference and be a leader in our community, please let me know and we will get you more information.

**[NEIL@NIAGARAIMPACTCLUB.CA](mailto:NEIL@NIAGARAIMPACTCLUB.CA)**

# THE GROWTH OF OUR BUSINESS:

It has been a great year as the business continues to grow and David and I would like to take a moment and thank those of you have worked with us this past year. It is such an honour that each of you put your trust in us to handle one of the largest financial decisions your family makes. Whether that is for your own home, or an investment property, that you chose us is a humbling experience and we truly appreciate it.

*Darcy & Lousielle*

*Abdul R.*

*Wally & Susan*

*Carmella*

*Matt & Krystal*

*Helen*

*Grant*

*Devon L.*

*Russ B.*

*Mark & Mina*

*Michael*

*Jess & Andrew*

*Godwin*

*Megan & Chris*

*Matt & Stacy*

*Glen & Deanna*

*Mary*

*F.C. Management*

*Lisa*

*Muni*

*Miranda*

*Ewan & Jillian*

*Michelle R.*

*Brock M*

*Helen & Kenneth*

*Michelle*

*Alida & Francois*

*Trudy & John*

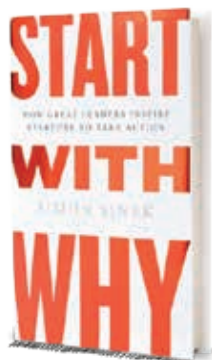
From the bottom of our heart, Thank You for your business and for referring us to the people that you care about most. Our success is because of you.

In the new year, we will be launching a new website that will better highlight our documented Value-Driven approach through case studies to outline how we can get those results for our clients. In the meantime, if any of you are interested in our documented Value-Driven approach you can request your own copy by going to [www.freebookpayitforward.ca](http://www.freebookpayitforward.ca) Saying thank you always seems too small of a phrase, but it will have to do. Thank you again for your referrals and your trust, and if you ever need anything please don't hesitate to ask us. If we can help or connect you to those that can we would be more than happy to do so.

## OUR GROWTH:

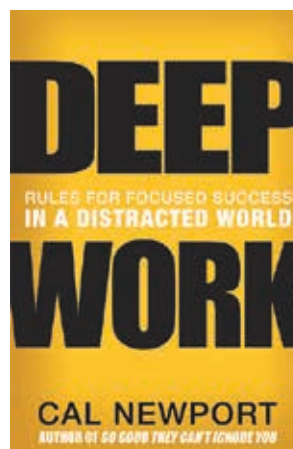
David and I are constantly reading and learning new things and we would like to share with you some of the books and people that have impacted us.

### FIRST UP IS "START WITH WHY" BY SIMON SINEK.



A great book for anyone looking to launch or develop their own business. A great quote from this books is "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it." If you want to get a flavour of this book, he has a 15 minute TED talk on YouTube. Just Google 'Start with Why' TED talk and give a listen. It's worth the 15 or 20 minutes.

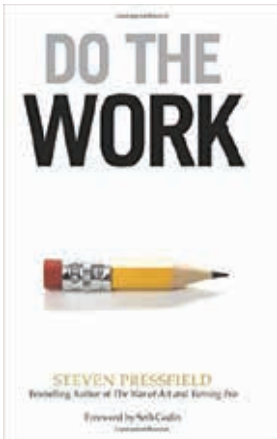
### SECOND IS "DEEP WORK" BY CAL NEWPORT



Cal is a professor at Georgetown University. In our instant society where we all get tweets and FB posts every few seconds, it is easier than ever to get distracted and as a result get less of real import done in our days. Writing, hosting a Podcast, Philanthropy work and running our Real Estate business forces us to be even more focused, and this was a huge help in recognizing the pitfalls and how to handle them.

CONT'D...

**THE NEXT IS SIMILAR IN TOPIC, IT'S "DO THE WORK" BY STEVEN PRESSFIELD.**



It's a great little book, and it helps ID all the forms of resistance we all get when trying to execute on any project or business. It gives you that kick in the ass that we all need from time to time.

With all the time we spend driving, showing properties, and meeting with clients, we do spend time listening to Podcasts as well. So, if any of you are

like us and are looking for something other than the radio to keep you company, try out the Tim Ferriss podcast. In short he deconstructs "world-class performers from eclectic areas (investing, sports, business, art, etc.) to extract the tactics, tools, and routines you can use. This includes favorite books, morning routines, exercise habits, time-management tricks, and much more.

*Prior guests include Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jamie Foxx, Edward Norton, Tony Robbins, Maria Popova, Peter Thiel, Marc Andreessen, Amanda Palmer, Malcolm Gladwell, Rick Rubin, Reid Hoffman, Jon Favreau, Whitney Cummings, Mike Shinoda, and dozens more." Just Google "Tim Ferriss podcast" if you are interested. We like it because you get access to the ultra-successful who spend time telling you how they did it. I always come away with a couple nuggets I can apply to my life. These can be long podcasts, so great for long trips.*

***From all of us here at Sokol & O'Donnell Realty, we want to wish all of you a merry Christmas and terrific New Year. We look forward to having you join us in the NIAGARA IMPACT CLUB to make a difference in our community. Cheers.***

