

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.

LESSONS FROM MY DAD...

I was thinking about this as I drove back from Ottawa the other weekend. First, I forgot how long of a drive it is, but it gave me time to think about things. So, if I ramble a bit here and there, please excuse me.

My Dad is always there for me, and has been there for me throughout my life.

I remember when I was 11 or 12 and I wanted to play baseball. There wasn't a local team for me to play with, so my Dad got some of the other dads together and formed a coaching staff. He called the town to arrange for the field, found sponsors to get the uniforms and equipment and then boom, all of a sudden there was a local baseball team for me and the rest of the local kids to play on. Now, we weren't a great team but we all got to play baseball and have fun, and it was all made possible because of the involvement of my Dad, and the other volunteer dads.

A couple other memories that stand out.

My Dad was always a hard worker and a huge stickler for the truth. Growing up on an active cattle farm there isn't a lot of time to just sit around, there was always something to do. I remember one time when I was a kid, again maybe 7 or 8 years old, it was the fall and just after 'back to school' in September, so the days were still nice out, and most of the cattle were



still grazing in the field. One of my chores was to go feed the three or four cattle still tied up in the barn when I got home from school. Now, at that time, my mom was working full time, and my Dad worked other jobs, (building and renovating houses, among other jobs) as well as farming to keep the bills paid, as cattle farming didn't make a lot of money, so I got off the bus by myself, and took care of myself and my sister until our parents got home from work. (Babysitting rules were a lot more lax in those days) Anyway, for whatever reason, I didn't feel like going all the way to the barn and feeding those cattle, so I didn't. The next day, I didn't feel like going either, so again I didn't. This went on for about 4 or 5 days until my Dad found out. Now, I know what you are thinking, that he lost his mind and blew his top or something. Nope. I think that may have been better if he had. Instead, he said he was disappointed in me. Now that was bad, but what was worse is that it took me a really long time to build back that trust. As a seven-year-old kid, I never realized how valuable having someone's trust is. It is a lesson I have never forgotten to this day, and it has become one of my core values- trust and integrity in everything I do and say.

The influence my Dad has had in my life is a big reason why I do what I do for my Boys.

I attend as many field trips as possible. I take them to football or hockey every week. I coach or act as assistant coach for their Football team. (I never played hockey as a kid, and I just tried last year and the other dads still laugh about it). I try to never miss any of the boys' dentist or doctor appointments, or a haircut. I'm striving to have a similar relationship with my boys that my Dad and I currently have, and have had throughout the years.

I'm almost 43 years old now and I've started to reflect on life. I've learned a lot of life lessons, but I'm far from having 'all the answers.' One thing I do know is that the traits that I have today were molded from my parents' traits. I'm carving my own niche in life, but the examples my parents set for me throughout the years definitely have a major influence. I believe that each

LESSONS FROM MY DAD CONT'D

person walks their own path in life, but parents/mentors/role-models start you down that path.

Just like I hope that Conor and Rogan learn traits from Sue and me. From Sue, that studying hard and applying yourself at school, while also fostering creativity, and creative endeavours, are able to be done together and are not mutually exclusive. From Me, that hard work and planning are key components for success and being prepared for all situations. I hope that they have learned how to talk to and relate to people, overcome hurdles, and think on their feet. My boys hear the conversations I have with clients, and that if there is an issue I find a way to solve the problem. I'll sometimes ask the boys, "Did you hear what I said there? See how I handled that situation?" Just little teaching points.

My Dad relentlessly exhibited an unwavering work ethic

Growing up on a cattle farm was an awesome childhood. I didn't always think so, but looking back always being able to play outside and explore nature was great. We lived just off of the farm, with my grandparents still living in the original farm house next door, and I had the ability to walk (or take my 4 wheeler) to see my grandparents anytime I wanted.



When not in school I'd go help my Dad on the weekends. We'd wake up early and feed the cattle and 'muck out' the stalls. At the time I HATED IT-the physical labour. I loved spending the time with my Dad; it was priceless and enjoyable. The manual labour sucked. I saw what my dad did on a daily basis, and although I admire the heck out of what he did, being a farmer and cleaning stalls, being kicked and stepped on by cattle, fixing fences, etc was not something I wanted to do as a profession. I was fine with planting the crops, harvest, and non-animal chores, I was

just not a big fan of the cattle. They taste great, don't get me wrong, I love my steak and a good prime rib, but I prefer that side than the raising of them. My Dad is over 70 now and he still works 7 days a week, and that work ethic was instilled in me at a very young age.

Another trait of my dad is he has an uncanny ability to be able to fix ANYTHING...

Growing up on a farm, things break and you are always fixing them. A well pump quits, you don't call a plumber. You pull it apart yourself, identify the problem, and fix it. When there was an electrical issue, my Dad never called an electrician, he identified the problem, reverse engineered how it was supposed to work, and fixed the problem. Tractor breaks down, mower blades not working...Dad would take it apart, identify the problem, and figure out a way to get it fixed. In 43 years, I have never seen my Dad NOT solve a problem himself. Granted, he would usually end up with an extra part or two when he put it back together, but he is an AMAZING problem solver.

Just recently I was taking stock of my real estate business and where I am. Where I want to go. What I do well and what I need to improve. I went back and was reading my reviews, and what my clients thought about their experiences with me. Two things stood out.

First, they said that I was available and would always respond quickly to any questions or concerns they might have. See, as a Real Estate Agent, much like my Dad, I run my own business. Although I'm not cleaning stalls 7 days a week doing physical labour, I do work with my clients daily. And if I have an offer out for a buyer, or I'm negotiating a contract for a seller, I can't tell you the number of times I'm on my bedroom porch, pacing back and forth negotiating a contract well after most people stop are home from their 9-5 job.

Working hard is great, but what I believe is my strongest asset is my ability to be able to solve problems that arise during real estate transactions.

I learned this skill from watching my Dad problem solve throughout the years. He was never flustered. If one way didn't work, he'd regroup and try another. If that didn't work, he'd finally figure out the flaw in his logic and solve the problem. As he always said, is that there is ALWAYS more than one way to 'skin a cat.' Meaning that if an issue arises and the first solution doesn't work, regroup and find another way.

Recently we were buying an investment property for one of my

LESSONS FROM MY DAD CONT'D

clients and the bank insisted on an appraisal before approving the financing. The listing agent wasn't available to let the appraiser in to the property, so I made sure I was available and the appraisal went fine. All good, right? Should be no issues right? The day before we need to sign off on the conditions to firm up the purchase, the bank said the appraisal is not complete, and they won't issue the financing. What?!? I was there, what is the issue? So, first I get on the phone, speak to the appraiser. Nope, he said everything was done and submitted on time so nothing on his end. Ok, second, I call the bank back and they are still saying it's incomplete? Where is the problem? So, after pressing the bank to explain their processes, it turns out that this particular bank uses a third party company that outsources the appraisals. Once I get that company's information from the bank, I contact them and find out that the software that the outsourcing company uses to take the appraisal and submit to the bank dropped some of the data from the appraiser. Okay, now we know what is broken, so how do we fix this? This was a pretty hard negotiation as we were able to get the price about 30k below asking, and I now have to get the Seller to extend our timeline. I explain the situation to both my client and the Seller, and both are a little upset at the delay. "I understand," I said, "but you still want to sell it right?" "Yes" says the Seller... "and you still want to buy it right?" my client turns to me and says "Yes". "Okay then, all we need to do is to extend it a few days due the bank's mistake and it's all good."

“Disaster averted. We got the extension, the sale went through and both my client and the Seller were very pleased with the deal.”

I know for a fact that watching and learning from my Dad all those years, as he figured out ways to solve any problem that he encountered, definitely has inspired me to find ways to solve problems in my personal and professional life.

I want to let you know how much I appreciate YOU!!!! THANK YOU!!!! I received the following email message from a client after we sold their home. I really appreciate the calls, texts, and emails that I receive each month from you. Referrals are the lion's share of my business, and it really means a lot to me that you trust me with your friends and family.

“The first thing you will notice about Neil O'Donnell is that he listens more than he talks, a rarity in an industry filled with fast talkers trying to tell you what you want to hear. Neil has the ability to present choices clearly and concisely, keeping your goals in mind. His professionalism inspires confidence in what can truly be a stressful time. If you want an agent who will thoughtfully answer your questions and keep you informed during the process of buying and/or selling your home, then Neil O'Donnell is the agent for you.”

Darcy

Neil O'Donnell - Author and Creator

An entrepreneur and a relentless innovator of the real estate industry, Neil O'Donnell is the creator of the “Value-Driven Approach to Sell Real Estate,” author of the infamous report “Frauds, Lies, Cheats & Unethical Scams.” He also founded St.Catharines First Responder Only Program®, and is a licensed agent with Keller Williams Complete Realty. Neil has been called “provocative and entertaining,” but also “a committed philanthropist” for his mission to raise/donate over \$10,000 to local and First Responder-related charities each year.

Neil also supports many great local and national charities too, such as: Lincoln Humane Society, CIBC Run for the Cure, Heart & Stroke Foundation, MADD: Mothers Against Drunk Driving among others. Neil is a leader in the St.Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake business community as well, and co-founded ENG (Entrepreneurs Networking Group™) St.Catharines Chapter—an exclusive group of business owners, sales professionals and entrepreneurs, focused on three core pillars of impact: Philanthropy, Business, and Growth!



By Neil O'Donnell, author: of 'The Value-Driven Approach: A practical guide to protect yourself from REAL ESTATE GREED & bank and extra \$30,000 by THINKING like the great Warren Buffett.' He is a licensed agent with Keller Williams Complete Realty and a local entrepreneur as well. For a free copy of his book visit: www.FreeBookPayitForward.ca

THE SUPERVILLAINS OF REAL ESTATE

One of the most notorious and cunning salespeople in real estate – this month, you're introduced - watch your back...

Last month I introduced you to The Cheetah, one of the many Supervillains of real estate. If you remember, this supervillain's superpower was the power of pursuit. He is the one salesperson that can't be outrun. He is too fast. He doesn't read or understand social cues. And no, he will never get the hint, no matter how many times you give it to him.

This month I will introduce you to another of the real estate Supervillains. This series of articles is, of course, meant to be fun and entertaining—but there is too much truth contained in these descriptions to be considered fiction.

As a consumer it is important to understand that many commissioned-based salespeople lack integrity. This is not news to you, but I think a lot of people underestimate the threat. Especially when the seduction of their promises weigh mightily on our desire for that outcome.

"Your home sold, faster, for more money!" said in various ways, for whatever reason, leads homeowners to make stupid decisions that no responsible homeowner would ever make, if in fact rational thought was involved.

And specifically there is one Supervillain (of real estate) who's notorious for his over-promising ways. He hails from billboards and the glossy covered pages of The Real Estate Book, Newspaper, and other real estate publications. Dr. Ego bluntly stated, is all about HIM.

Sigmund Freud once said, speaking of "Dr. Ego," this is one race of people for whom psychoanalysis is of no use whatsoever. In his own omnipotent mind, he is the greatest, best, smartest, most knowledgeable, skilled expert that ever walked the planet.

This Supervillain is blissfully unaware of his shortcomings and weaknesses. However, as brilliant as this Supervillain believes he is, he's quite easy to stump. He doesn't even know the definition of the word "expert." And, if you'd like to prove it to yourself, just ask him "What makes you an expert? Why should I do business with you?" This is, after all, a plausible question that any homeowner might ask.

Internally, if you could see inside him, you'd notice he starts to sweat, squirms, and gets nervous... but, with blinded arrogance, will tell you everything about HIM, what makes HIM great – how HE'S a million-dollar producer, sold more homes than any other agent, how HE'S been in real estate longer than any other agent, how HE'S the best negotiator, the most skilled marketer, the most brilliant tactician, how HE knows the real estate market and market trends BETTER than anyone else (he'll probably even show you some beautifully designed graphs and

charts about HIM.)

This Supervillain doesn't understand it's not about him. That it is about YOU.

In addition, this Supervillain is the epitome of "fake it until you make it" and is always over-compensating. His clothes? He is always over-dressed. Suit, tie, ironed-shirt, and shoes, always shined. His car, probably leased, but it's top of the line. A Range Rover or something, whatever the "in" car of the week is, according to I Can't Afford It magazine.

This Supervillain prides himself on materialistic things – this is how he judges his value to himself – so he wears a nice watch, expensive, and is always pulling up his sleeve to make sure you see it. When talking to you, you'll notice he crosses his legs too, one over the other and leans back in his chair, taking on a sort of a slouched position. This is a villainous "move" that, for some reason, he believes makes him look confident, something he's practiced – another form of over-compensating.

But what makes this Supervillain so criminally dangerous is the fact his "Ego" is more important to him than you, or ANY real estate goal that you wish to achieve.

So when things go bad, and they often do – rather than risk damaging his ego or tarnishing it even the slightest bit (something Dr. Ego can't live with or even admit is possible) this Supervillain will blame you. YOU overpriced your home. YOU didn't accommodate showings. YOU didn't follow his advice. YOU... YOU... YOU... It's all your fault. And, if you examine this Supervillain's hands, you'll notice that his index finger is about 30% longer than all his others fingers, from a lifetime of out-stretched finger pointing.

This Supervillain is bipolar too. One day, he's your best friend. The next, he's throwing you under the bus – so be careful with this one! With this Supervillain, trust me, you need to watch your own back, yourself – it's imperative.

Dr. Ego is a team player, seemingly, and always has your back, right up until the point you need him most. Then, whatever is best for his ego takes priority. One moment, he's your confidante. The next, his knife, motivated by the pure size and importance of his ego, is 6-inches deep in your back.

Next month, based on the positive feedback of last month's column, I'll share with you the character traits of another Supervillain that lives amongst us, causing homeowners Horror Stories.

In the meantime, stay smart. Do your homework. Protect yourself.