

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.

DO YOU HAVE “A GUY”

I was at my chiropractor on Monday morning getting my back adjusted as I recover from a couple of herniated discs from last year when we get into the normal small talk that people do. After a few minutes he asks “so what do you have planned for the day” to which I get into the various different activities I have planned; meet with clients, do some research for my next article, continue work on my podcast and take my car to the shop for its regular maintenance. When I got the point in my list of things going on he stopped me and said “so, where do you take your car?” I told him I know this great place in Stoney Creek, Sabourin Auto. “Oh, so you have a guy”.

When he said that it got me thinking about how many times people have asked me “do you know a guy who....” I expect you get asked that all the time as well. So I started to ask myself why do people always ask “do you know a guy who....”. Now this is by no means sexist and of course this applies to women as well its just I normally get asked do you know a guy who does driveways, roofing, tile, mortgage, barber, lawyer, mechanic, etc. and in the conversation it is usually men. However, I have to say I do know some great successful women in some of those

roles as well. I'll get to them in another letter. Ok, back to why do people ask this and the reason is simple, they are looking for someone they can trust without having to go through the trial and error themselves.

I got into this discussion with Dave at Sabourin Auto while he was doing the oil change on my Volkswagen Jetta TDI (still don't know what is happening with the diesel recall, urrg!) and it became so crystal clear that being in the auto mechanic business was really no different from being in real estate when it comes to trust and ‘do you know a guy”.

How many horror stories can you find if you asked your friends or neighbours about a bad mechanic and where someone got ‘ripped off’ and found out later and now are pissed off and will never go back to that garage again etc. Once that happens you start asking friends, family, co-workers, etc. “do you have a good mechanic because the last one I went to....” Being a mechanic is all about building trust with your clients as they come to trust you and the recommendations you make about what needs to be, or does not need to be, done with your vehicle. Real estate is no different. The clients I have the most fun with

are those clients that get referred to me. This is true for a couple reasons. First, since they were referred by a friend (almost everyone I do business with I have had a drink with so I don't look at them as clients but friends) and my friends are all good people so there is nothing better than meeting more good people. Second, I get to help someone through potentially a really stressful journey, the selling and/or buying of a home and that is something I genuinely enjoy.

Now I have to say that Rick Sabourin and his team (Dave and Max) have got to be some of the best mechanics I



I HAVE A GUY CONT'D

have ever met. I have known Rick and the guys for at least 10 years and they have never recommended work that has not needed to be done to the point of costing themselves money. I had one time a few years ago where my wife Sue was in Oakville and her car wouldn't start. I tried wiggling the battery cables, banged the battery around a couple time and tried all the other stuff people who aren't mechanics try and nothing worked. So, I had it towed to Rick's shop in Stoney Creek. Sue had been complaining of her brakes screeching and making lots of noise (and no, her insurance coverage is not that high so it was nothing like that) so I told Rick, probably the battery and/or alternator and can you do the brakes while you are at it. Now, I had just given him permission to do a full brake job on the car

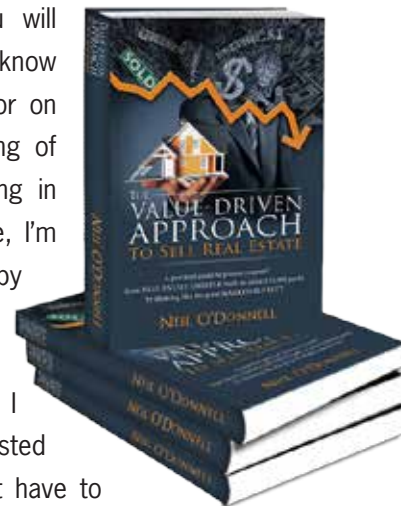


and you know that is hundreds of dollars in work. When I went to pick up the car the next day Rick had only changed the battery. He told me the alternator was fine it was a

bad battery and brakes were fine, just a had a little rust on them from sitting for a while (we had been on vacation and car hadn't seen any use in a couple weeks). Again, this is the type of honesty and integrity that people are looking for when they ask you "do you know a guy who...". Here was his opportunity to make a few extra bucks because I told him to do a brake job on the car however, he saw that it didn't need it so he didn't do it and saved me the money. Could he have done the brake job? Yep. Could he have made a few extra bucks for himself? Yep.

Would he have been right to do so since I told him to do it? Yep. Yet, he didn't.

This is the same type of honesty and integrity I try to bring to my real estate business and my every day life. I'm not out chasing 'leads', I'm not harassing people on the phone at the dinner table, you will not catch me knocking on doors like those guys wanting you to sign up for an energy contract, you will not hear me say "do you know anyone at work, church or on your street that is thinking of buying, selling or investing in real estate" script. Nope, I'm building my business by being the answer to "hey do you know a good guy who does real estate?" I want to be that trusted resource so people won't have to have a bad experience. So thank you to all of you have given my name when you are asked that question and as I said earlier I truly love meeting more great people like all of you. So thanks again and keep'em coming.



PS – If you hear someone talking about selling their home, did you know you can gift them a copy of my book... to see if our Approach works for them... www.giftbookforcharity.ca

PSS – If you haven't seen my book, you can see the information at www.freebookpayitforward.ca

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!



PHILANTHROPY, BUSINESS AND GROWTH

That's Why

Those of you who are business owners have probably asked yourself, at one time or another, 'Why am I in business?' 'Why am I putting in 90 hour weeks when my friends and families work a 40hr week, and they get to turn it off when they leave the office?' Yes, I know, I know, it's to make money, but that is what most non-business owners think, and that is where that thought stops. However, that can't be the end goal or reason that those of you, like me, put in the hours we do. Money is not a good enough goal. It leaves you hollow inside if money is the sole reason. So, if not money, what is the reason? Family? Okay, yes, we do it to support our family and provide for them the best life we can. We need to put food on the table and provide a roof over our heads, pay for the kids' education, maybe take a vacation once in a while etc. However, that is still not enough of a reason to put in 90 hrs a week. We could get a 'job' and accomplish the same thing without killing ourselves with the long hours, nights, and weekends. So what else is it? I don't know if you have really thought about it or not, however I was having a really rough couple of weeks, complications came up in a couple deals, I missed an MRI appointment which I had been waiting on for 4 months, having arguments with the kids, etc (everyone gets stuff like this from time to time) and it made me stop and ask "Why? Why am I doing this?".

Why am I a business owner? There has to be more to it, and I realized there is more to it, a lot more.

The reason most business owners are in business, whether they realize it or not, is to help out their community. The more successful the business, the more they can give back to the community. Whether it is by sponsoring a local kids sports teams, supporting a local or national charity, or employing your neighbours which helps them provide for their family, there is a lot more to it than most people think. It is because of this that my business is based on the pillars of 'Philanthropy, Business and Growth.'

I have a number of family and friends that are either firefighters, police or paramedics, and they are the first ones to put the care and protection of others before themselves, and I was searching for a way to give back and support them. That was why I created the 'First Responders Only Program' (see www.freebook4firstresponders.ca), which allows me to give back to those people that do so much for us. The more my business grows the more I am able to give back

to our community. Even if you are not a First Responder, I am still helping to give back to our community through charity donations from my book (www.freebookpayitforward.ca). So, thanks to you helping me grow my business I would like to take the opportunity to introduce part the awesome team of people I am fortunate to be working with, starting with my partner David Sokol.

David Sokol is a big man with a big heart whose smile and energy are infectious to anyone he is around. The reason I partnered with David is that his dedication to our clients and his outlook on supporting his community is second to none. Outside of the charity donations David and I are already doing, our office also designates a day designed to do nothing but support our community, we call



it Red Day. Here is a picture of David at Red Day volunteering at Gillian's Place, a shelter for abused women and children. Some of you may know this organization and for those of you who don't they are located in the former Victoria School at 15 Gibson Place in St.Catharines and are one of the first, if not the first abused women's shelters in Niagara. We spent the day helping

to do small repairs, landscaping etc. so that money that would have had to be spent could instead go to support those women and children who really need it.

Some of you have already met David and others haven't, but partnering together has helped us be in two places at once to really support our friends/clients. Its great to have a partner but a person who is equally focused on making a difference in our community and serving our clients is a rare find.

Just like you wouldn't want to see a heart surgeon preparing the needles, sterilizing the instruments, and wheeling the patient in, (after all you expect them to have a team of very skilled professionals to help them with the surgery), we also have a great team of professionals to support us and our clients. I look forward to introducing the rest of the team in next month's letter. Until then, thank you for the referrals and please keep them coming. Its your support that makes all this possible and without you we wouldn't be able to make the difference in peoples lives that we do.

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

An Open Letter To (and a bit of humor for) Lighthearted Niagara Residents Who Do Not Highly Trust Real Estate Agents...

A little while ago, the National Association of Realtors® (NAR) released a 163-page report titled, The Danger Report—consisting of content true to its title. Outlining in detail the dangers that threaten to the long-term survival of the real estate industry, as respect for the real estate agent continues to erode and deteriorate.

The number one threat on that list, "The real estate industry is saddled with a large number of part-time, untrained, unethical and/or incompetent agents. This knowledge gap threatens the credibility of the industry."

Yes, that is true – but who cares about the threats to real estate industry? Why is the trade organization (NAR) so concerned about the survival of the industry, when, if they just imposed higher standards, and a greater focus and priority on the consumer, they could turn back the clock to a time when their "survival" wasn't at risk.

In my experience, just as the industry is fighting for its survival, so is every agent. This, for many obvious reasons, presents a great danger to the consumer. In the game of ethics, too often I feel like I'm fighting a losing battle. Like Gotham City, in the Batman movies and comics, I've found real estate has a way of bringing out the worst in people. There is some great science behind why this happens, explaining why good people do unethical things.

It can be summarized though in one word, "Survival." And to the extent someone will go to "survive" i.e. collect a commission check, secure his or her next client, etc. is almost endless.

In fact, studies show only about 3% of the population is greed-driven, to the point someone could/would actually participate in a criminal behavior, think of the Bernie Maddoff-types. But, scarier! Nearly every human on Earth, if/when injected with sufficient desperation (the most powerful force on Earth – because it's tied to survival) can be motivated to do bad things.

Key phrase: Motivated...to do "bad"-things

Unfortunately, and sadly, this often results in homeowners experiencing Horror Stories. And, the agents that cause these Horror Stories, I refer to them, only half-jokingly, as real estate's Supervillains.

There is Captain Bait-and-Switch, Dr. Ego, The Cheetah, Mr. Mojo, The Gatekeeper and more. **But let me introduce you, this week, to The Cheetah:**

No doubt a funny name for a Real Estate Supervillain, but he's known for his speed and determination. If you think you can escape him, think again. He's faster than you, more persistent than you. He's more determined than you too. This Supervillain possesses the evil superpower of pursuit. Once he's identified you as someone interested "in buying or selling a home," or any piece of real estate – you become prey.

The Cheetah is the ultimate predator. He will call you, and call you, and call you. Email you, and email you, and email you. This Supervillain is the king of jumping to conclusions – he assumes (and you can't stop him from doing so) that you are his client, when you're not. He is insanely possessive. In the real world, this Supervillain most closely resembles an obsessed stalker.

He sees the "chase" as just lighthearted and fun. He sees himself with a distorted view; he thinks he's just being helpful. Personal boundaries and social cues mean nothing to this Supervillain. When he's ignored or politely blown off (or even rudely blown off), he doesn't get the hint.

"So, you're playing hard to get?" he says to himself. He then pounds a Red Bull®, and grabs his second wind.

The only protection against this Supervillain is to safeguard your contact information. Your phone number, your email – you can't let him get it. The Cheetah is a telemarketer extraordinaire. He is an email and follow-up ninja. If you avoid him, he will knock on your door and peep through your windows. He has the tongue of a politician. There's no shaking this super-salesman-Supervillain – he is built and engineered for pursuit.

My advice: Stay out of his crosshairs! Lay low, do your best to stay off the grid...out of sight, out of mind is your only form of protection.

Once The Cheetah identifies you as a "prospect," there's absolutely no saving you – you've earned yourself a stalker. And he's fast, and cunning. If push comes to shove, consider a restraining order :-)

I'm telling you, folks, protect yourself. The Cheetah is the one real estate Supervillain you simply can't outrun.

Next month, or perhaps in several future installments, I will outline the evil character traits of the other Supervillains that live amongst us, causing homeowners Horror Stories.

I know my description is delivered somewhat tongue-and-cheek—to be humorous—but the seed of comedy is truth. If you've never bought a home before, maybe you haven't yet experienced the harassment-like behavior of The Cheetah. But if you have, you likely know all too well the truth that was presented in the description above.