

# O'Donnell<sup>THE NEIL</sup>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.

## THE DISNEY EXPERIENCE

• What our first trip to Disney taught me •

February saw our family set out on our very first real family vacation. When my wife, Sue, and I started looking at various resorts and vacation packages there was just so much to choose from. Our two boys, Conor 11 and Rogan 7 years old, also had their ideas about what a great family vacation meant to them.

After a lot of discussion about what we all wanted in a vacation, we finally decided on Walt Disney World in Florida. I'm sure like most of you living in the Niagara area, and being closer to the border than Toronto we decided we would fly out of the Buffalo airport. Now for my boys this would be their first time going across the border, flying on a plane, as well as going to Disney so definitely a vacation full of firsts.

Some of you have probably been to Disney, and/or have friends that have been numerous times, and just love it, and talk about how amazing Disney is. It's really hard not to want to go and check it out when so many people just rave about it. We have those same kinds of friends. From the ones who drive down and camp at Disney, to the friends that fly down, both have tons of suggestions on how to 'do' Disney.

Everything at Disney just seemed so effortless for us as guests beginning with the Disney Magical Express from Orlando International Airport to the meal plan and the "skip the insanely long line 'Fastpass' system" they have. This is not to say that there weren't glitches and issues but I will get to that later. The boys absolutely loved that every ride came out in a gift shop.

The really interesting part was that all the staff, really bought

into the culture and what it means to be 'Disney'. It didn't matter who we talked to, from the concierge at the hotel, to a waiter at the restaurant to someone emptying the trash, the level of happiness and willingness to help you was nothing less than stellar. On day 2 of our Disney vacation we were seeing the Indiana Jones stunt spectacular, and about 5 minutes into the show my oldest got sick. We barely made it out of the stands before we had an 'incident'. The staff in the area all jumped in,



brought him some water, offered to call the nursing staff (yes, apparently they have nursing staff), offered Gravol, etc. They were prepared for everything, and not once did they lose that smile or happy demeanor.

Now I did mention that Disney was not perfect and did have issues. We were at the Magic Kingdom and we were schedule to go on Splash Mountain. When our time came, (with the Fastpass you have to book a time), the ride was experiencing 'technical difficulties'.

The young girl who was taking questions from the guests told us she didn't know when the ride would reopen. Conor was really disappointed because it was a hot day and he loves to take Sue on rides with big drops as she is afraid of heights. I think he likes watching his mother freak out about as much as he likes the ride itself. Anyway, seeing that Conor was visibly disappointed, she went on to her iPad or touch tablet and tweaked our Fastpass to allow us to go to the front of the line. No limits. Conor got to take his mother on Big Thunder Run, Space Mountain, and then finally later that day Splash Mountain. Now, that Disney employee didn't have to go out of her way, but Disney allows her to make those decisions without

## THE DISNEY EXPERIENCE CONT'D

having to speak to her manager. She was able to think of solutions to keep us happy and loving the experience of Disney. Imagine if she didn't do that and we weren't able to go on other rides, and we lost that opportunity. Would our experience be as good? Would our impression of Disney be tarnished? Yes, I would think it would have. Instead they turned a potentially bad experience into a good one and strengthened the image of Disney.

I'm not going to give you a recap of our entire Disney vacation, but we finished our vacation without any more major 'technical difficulties'. Disney was a great experience, and while it was not a relaxing vacation, it was a great vacation none the less.

First let me say that Disney truly was an amazing experience and that if you have a chance to go, you should, just for the experience. The amazing thing was that we all came away with different things we noticed about how Disney runs their business. Disney World is so much like its own little country it's that easy to forget sometimes that it is still, at its core, a business. There are perhaps only a handful of businesses that take the overall, end-to-end customer experience and make it the top priority. Other than Disney the ones that jump to mind are Apple and Amazon. I'm sure there are others out there, but those are definitely the 'Big 3'.

The thing that really struck me is that in my real estate business I am always trying to go above and beyond for my clients, but sometimes we too can run into 'technical difficulties'. It is at that time, just like Disney, we need to go above and beyond with a little extra attention to maintain that great experience for my clients.

Last fall, an older client of mine was moving from the GTA to the Hamilton area to 'right size', and on the day of closing she started to get a little panicked about how she was going to get the keys to her new place. You see, her lawyer was in downtown Toronto and was not returning her calls, and she was with the movers on her way to Hamilton. I should also mention that she was not a big fan of driving in any kind of downtown traffic. So, I got a hold of her lawyer, and the sellers' lawyer in Hamilton, and made arrangements for me to get the keys and I delivered



them to her new home and waited for her to arrive.

Now, that is not something that is not something a real estate agent has to do, but buying and selling a home can be really stressful for people. Going above and beyond, giving that little extra attention and effort can really go a long way. What could have been a very negative experience for her turned into what 'move in day' should be; a great day as you move into your new home and start the next phase of your life.

In the week following her 'move in' day, I touched based a few times to see how things were going. She was very happy and thanked me again for going 'out of my way' to help her. It doesn't take much to notice when

someone needs a little extra attention, and just like when that young girl at Disney did for us. That little extra, to give my son an awesome Disney experience, I try do to that for each and every one of my clients.

As Walt Disney said, in "what ever you do, do it well." and I truly believe that is what I do for my clients that make them happy to refer their family and friends.

If you have a Disney or vacation story where someone went out of their way to make your experience fantastic or unforgettable, I would love to hear it the next time we chat.



***"What ever you do, do it well. Do it so well that when people see you do it they will want to come back and see you do it again and they will want to bring others and show them how well you do what you do."***

By Neil O'Donnell,  
author: The Value-Driven Approach To Sell Real Estate: A practical guide to protect yourself from REAL ESTATE GREED & bank an extra \$30,000 by thinking like the great WARREN BUFETT.

*It's not as easy as you think to achieve maximum profit...*

# TRUE DIFFERENTIATION:

*How it impacts profit and dictates strategy when selling a home.*

I realize the image to the right may look a little Howard Hughes-ish, but there is a method to my madness. And this sketch, if you're thinking of

selling your home, may have a profound and direct impact on your bottom-line profit. You'll also want to share this with friends and family members that you care about too.

When I set out to study Warren Buffett, his investment philosophy, to find out what made him the world's greatest investors, and, ultimately, how his methods could be applied to my clients' home sale—I came stumbled upon a book called Differentiate or Die. This book changed my entire perspective on real estate. Jack Trout was the author. In the book he laid out the fundamental reasons why a business must differentiate from competitors, not just to be successful, but as the key ingredient to thrive in our current era of Killer Competition. Now, admittedly, from a business perspective, this is common sense. Every entrepreneur knows he must differentiate his business. As a mentor once told me, "Nobody needs two left shoes." In business, if two businesses are the same, then one is dispensable.

But, this got me thinking, business, and the fight for new customers, really, is no different than real estate and the fight for homebuyers.

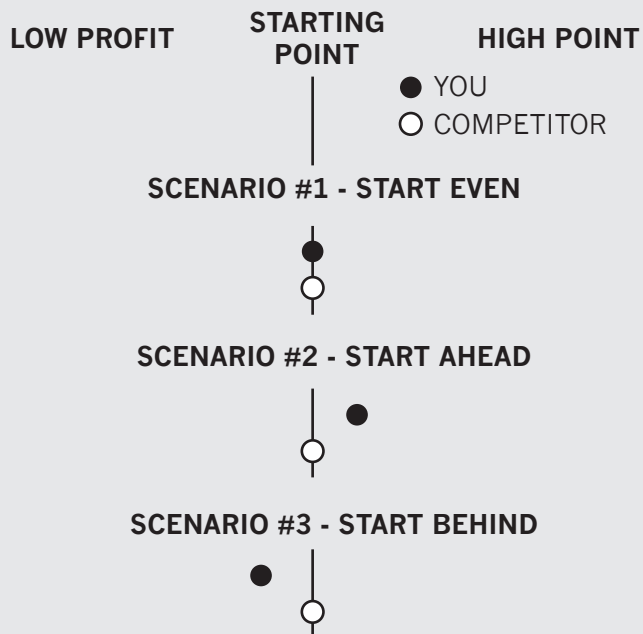
Your home is a home, yes, but analogously speaking, it is also product no different than Tide laundry detergent, where you are the owner of that product, no different than Proctor & Gamble is Tide. And see, when you look at your home through this lens—the profit from your home sale; its ability to compete in the marketplace—comes down to your ability to differentiate.

Is your home no different than the many other homes on the market? Is it just a commodity? Or is it different, and could it be judged superior?

In my sketch above, you'll notice there are three scenarios. Each scenario describes the starting position of your product, your home, in relation to other competing homes on the market. Each of these scenarios can also be thought of as a race.

The more and better you differentiate your product, the faster you move forward toward higher profit. And of course, the less you differentiate the faster you move backwards toward lower profit. All the while the other homes on the market, in your neighborhood, in

## DIFFERENTIATION



**\* There is a 4th scenario and I'll get to that in a minute. This 4th possible scenario is actually the most common scenario for homeowners, and, it is precisely what sabotages their chance at maximum profit.**

your price range, with similar square footage, amenities, etc., are competing in the same race.

**IN SCENARIO #1** – you, your home, you start even with your competitors. You are neither ahead of behind. There is no discernible difference between your home and others. No apparent advantages and no apparent disadvantages.

**IN SCENARIO #2** – you, your home, starts out ahead of the competition. This could be for a number reasons. But through some means of differentiation, you have the advantage of a 5-second head start. So as long as you run the race appropriately, and don't trip over your feet or make a fundamental mistake, you have increased odds of winning.

**IN SCENARIO #3** – you, your home, starts out at a notable disadvantage to the competition. You are now the underdog, not the

## TRUE DIFFERENTIATION CONT'D

frontrunner. And to win, and bank the most profit from your home sale, you'll have to run the race of your life.

Part of my job then becomes, prior to creating the actual "race strategy," is to determine where a clients' home's starting position is.

If you're running the 800-meter dash, for example, someone running on the inside lanes—from a strategic standpoint—must run a very different race than the runner who runs in the outside lanes. Similarly, the runner with a known disadvantage, like Aimee Lee Mullins, an NCAA Division One athlete at Georgetown University who had her lower legs amputated as a child (I will tell you her incredible story next month), must run a very different race than the runner who doesn't have that handicap.

Now you would think that every home, given the three scenarios above, either a) starts out even, b) ahead or c) behind the competition, right? Wrong. There is actually a 4th possible scenario.

**IN SCENARIO #4** – you, your home, starts out ahead of the competition but...only "in your mind." For obvious reasons, this is dangerous.

When a homeowner is blinded to their true starting position in relation to other competing homes on the market; due to pride of ownership, ego, arrogance, lack of understanding of how true differentiation works, how value is created, etc., almost always, in my experience, they sabotage their chance for maximum profit.

There is, by the way, nothing wrong with starting from behind. The fabled underdog story exists for this reason, to upset the odds-makers. But the underdog, to win, must realize he is the underdog and, through strategy, offset his handicap.

David versus Goliath: An apparent mismatch, but in this fight Goliath's size is no match for a small well-placed stone, shot from a

distance, out of reach of Goliath, from David's high-tension slingshot. Bing! One stone upside the head, and Goliath is out.

This is why, in my book, *The Value-Driven Approach to Sell Real Estate: How to protect yourself from Real Estate Greed and bank an extra \$30K in profit by thinking like the great WARREN BUFFETT*, I talk about the importance of getting an accurate and comprehensive diagnosis—for this very reason—to identify your homes' true starting point.

The last scenario in the world you ever want to participate in is scenario #4.

One interesting tidbit too, about how true differentiation works, when done correctly and effective, you not only control whether your home moves forward or backward "in the race" toward higher or lower profit, you also control whether other competing homes (with yours) move forward or backward too.

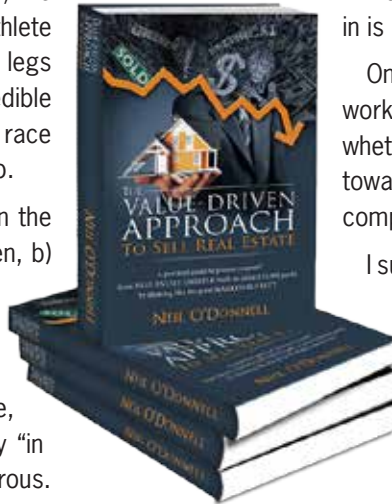
I suppose it's kind of like cheating, that is tying a rope around your competitor, and anchoring him to a tree before the start of the race, but hey – that other homeowner should have hired someone who understands true differentiation, then they wouldn't have been in that position, chained to a lower potential profit.

The biggest secret, though, for maximum profit, you must know your "product's" starting point in relation to its competitors. Without this, nothing else really matters, as the details are fiction and hypothetical, and not reality.

But with reality, we can get to true strategy.

If it turns out that we're the underdog, so be it, we'll run the race of the underdog and in accord to the facts, to strive for the upset.

For a more in-depth discussion on this topic, go to: [www.FreeBookPayitForward.ca](http://www.FreeBookPayitForward.ca). There you can request a FREE copy of my forthcoming book "The Value-Driven Approach To Sell Real Estate: How to protect yourself from Real Estate Greed & bank an extra \$30K in profit by thinking like the great WARREN BUFFETT.



## 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!

