

O'Donnell^{THE NEILL}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.

TRICK OR TREAT! WEARING A MASK IS GREAT FOR HALLOWEEN, BUT IS IT GREAT FOR YOU?

Following up on last month's newsletter, "Trump or Hillary, Is There a Choice?", I thought it appropriate that this month's newsletter have a Halloween theme. Halloween has just passed, and we are now skating along towards the next "big" holiday, Christmas. (One note here, please hold off on the Christmas decorations until Nov 15th. Please honour our Veterans, as we lead up to Remembrance Day. It is important to be the example to our children, and not gloss over a very important period



of reflection to thank and honour those who fought for our freedom.) Our friends in the U.S. must still choose their next President, and man, what a choice! Whoever they choose will be wrong for 50% of the country, according to the news reports, and Trump may

not accept the verdict if he loses. Yeesh. This has gone from entertaining, to tiresome, and moving into worrisome. Politicians are the same here as in the U.S., insofar as what they say they will do to get into power, and what they actually do, are usually two different things. It is as if they are wearing a costume as they are running for election, and then take it off once they are elected. That leaves us to figure out who is under that mask so we can make an intelligent choice.

What I don't get are the people that wear masks every day of their life. They act one way at work, and then another when they are 'off the clock'. The amount of energy that must take is unbelievable. When you watch political debates or clips from the campaign trail, you can see how tired the candidates are, but the forced smile never leaves their face. The scripted answers rarely fail them, except maybe for Trump, and they just don't sound authentic, do they? Every time we hear what sounds like a scripted answer, our BS detectors go off a little bit. So, if Trump wins, will we get a wall built on the borders, cancel NAFTA and TPP, (trans pacific partnership), or will he be more moderate as he finds out how hard it will be to do those things? If Hillary wins, will she renegotiate NAFTA and TPP? She has switched her position on that a couple of times already. Who knows...your guess is as good as mine. Their masks are so damned good no one in the US really knows who they will get after the election, no matter who wins.

Politicians are really good at wearing those masks, which makes our job of voting so much harder. It is actually not so different when choosing to hire someone to do a job for you. No matter what service or product you need, please do your best to find out who's behind the marketing, the scripts and the tactics. It pays to do so. We need to try to see past the marketing BS, and get to what's real. We should be asking ourselves, "Who is really under that mask?"

If there are so many people doing their business under a mask, it's safe to say that it's not so different than a good Halloween party, right?

Speaking of parties, did any of you go to a Halloween party? Did you buy a costume or make one from scratch? My wife and I went to one, and I have been so busy that I broke down and

bought a costume, but Sue always makes her own. As some of you know, she is an artist, and a very creative person, so it was no surprise that when I suggested we just go buy costumes, she said "No way, I will make my own." I am one of those people who enjoy Halloween, but not one to decorate my house like the one from 'Friday the 13th', nor do I like gory stuff. I like it because for one day out of the year you get a chance to pretend to be anyone you want. I am always fascinated by the choices of people's



costumes, as it can give you a glimpse into how a person thinks. Sue always comes up with great costumes for herself and our boys. One year she made a costume for Rogan, our youngest. He wanted to be a Dalmatian-

Monster-Dragon, combining his love of dogs, monsters and of course, dragons. Now that's something you definitely won't find anywhere. One year, Conor wanted to be Elvis. We are talking the full on, rhinestone, white jumpsuit, sparkly belt, side burns Elvis, complete with microphone, and Sue custom made the entire costume. It was great! Now, you can look at that and get a glimpse into how she thinks, and say 'She is definitely creative, takes pride in doing things herself, and goes the extra mile for her family.' It is a reflection of who she is.

I always tend to go out as some kind of Super Hero, (Superman and Clark Kent), some romantic type, (Phantom of the Opera, The Dread Pirate Roberts from 'The Princess Bride'), or a member of the Military or First Responder, (Maverick from 'Top Gun', Fire Fighter, Knight, SWAT team member). Now this will give you some insight into how I think, and view the world, which is a much longer conversation that I will gladly have with anyone who wants to. (But it's gotta be over a pint or two). All of this is in line with who I am, and how I conduct myself the other 364 days of the year.

My costume choice is a reflection of the real me, and how I think, no matter what I wear on Halloween. Whether people agree, "Great costume", or just laugh because they are not

Halloween costume people, I'm okay with that. I'm good.

There are a lot of Real Estate agents out there who, while wearing their mask, will tell you whatever you want to hear to get you to choose them to sell your house.

If you think your house is worth \$1 million, and it is really worth \$500k, they will agree with you if they think it's what you want to hear. They will tell you they have a 117-point marketing plan, or they spend hundreds of thousands on marketing compared to the next agent. Hell, they may even tell you they will give you insider information! Just recently (Oct 24th to be exact) the Real Estate Council of Ontario (RECO,) who are one of the regulating bodies of the real estate industry here in the province, sent out this notice about a **"CBC Current Affairs" program. The reporter recorded several "hidden camera" videos where, as part of a multiple representation arrangement, registrants representing the seller promised to control the offer process or disclose the value of other offers to their buyer clients."** Are you kidding me! Now I bet the people who have hired those agents didn't bother to look behind the mask but if they did, wow, would they have been in for a surprise.

This is what I am talking about. Real estate agents, like politicians, are really good at wearing those masks, which is why I write these newsletters. To help give people insight into who I am, what my values are and how I work.

Just a couple weeks ago a client that we are working with was trying to buy a property in competition against a handful of other offers, and after we learned we won it, what the listing agent told me really hammered home why we do things differently than the rest. He said that we won in large part due to the knowledge of my client and the professionalism and courtesy we showed in dealing with the offer. Other agents had been trying to bully the seller and harass him where we were respectful. Not only did we win out over the other bids, our offer didn't have the highest price. Again, our value-driven approach is just that, value, which = \$\$\$ in my client's pocket.

It doesn't matter what industry you are talking about; lawyers,

TRICK OR TREAT CONT'D

contractors, used car sales, real estate, etcetera, you have to know the character and values of those you are dealing with. If you don't, you could be in for a nasty trick, instead of the treat



you were hoping for.

So, if you went to a Halloween party, I would love to hear about your costumes, or some really good ones you saw at the party. OR, if you know of a business who appeared to be one thing, but turned out to be completely different, I would love to hear those stories as well. I am always looking for good referrals for businesses for my clients.

Take care, keep trying to find the truth behind the masks, and during November please take a moment to remember our Veterans, and those who sacrificed so much for the freedoms we have today.

#IMPACT NIAGARA

Are you positively impacting other people's lives? That is a question that I've been asking myself for quite a while now. I know all of my clients are positively impacted from a professional stand point but what about all the other people in our community? I'm not looking for some grand 'change the world' action or anything, but I think it is important, as a business owner and entrepreneur, to give back to the community that supports you. With November being "Movember" for men's health, Remembrance Day, and Christmas fast approaching there is no better time to dedicate a little energy to making a positive impact in our community. Our society has become so 'me' focused lately it feels like the right time to pay it forward.

I am challenging myself but I also want to challenge all of you to pay it forward, to make a positive impact in our community. Again, this doesn't have to be any grandiose gesture, it can be as simple as holding the door for someone, paying for someone's coffee at Tim's, bringing some donuts to your local police station (that could be fun for so many reasons), helping a neighbour rake leaves, donating time or money to a charity, etc. Whatever you can think of. If any of you do take up this challenge let me know. Send me an email, tag me on Facebook, send me a text anything. I would love to hear it. I will be posting my acts on Facebook to help inspire others to copy these actions. 2neilodonnell@gmail.com or 289-682-9152

Lets positively IMPACT NIAGARA.



MASTERFUL DECEPTION

Are real estate agents masterful at selling properties, quicker, for more money? Or are they simply masters of deceiving people into thinking that?

If you've bought and sold real estate, whether that's a single house or dozens of investment properties, you undoubtedly have heard the promises that agents make.

Prominently advertised on the radio, there is this one: "Call John Smith today. 1-800... He's so confident he can sell your home fast and for top dollar, in just 39 days, guaranteed, that if he can't, he'll step in and buy it himself." Of course, I can't know or predict your gut reaction to hearing this. Maybe your B.S. detector is firing on all cylinders.

Or do you buy into it hook line and sinker?, and think, "Damn, that's a great sounding deal. I should give John a call."

The assumption is, on behalf of the homeowner, "If John is so confident that he's willing to guarantee my home sold, in just 39 days, or he'll buy it himself, then "man John must be good." And while that may be true, the skeptical, less trusting and shrewder homeowners says, "fine print."

Every day though, I see homeowners taken by this promise. Only to be disappointed when the "promise" doesn't turn out to be credible. The Competition Bureau has a term for this. You might call it bait-and-switch. But really it's not illegal, it's just deception.

You expect fine print and the use of asterisks in situations where terms and conditions are obvious. The lottery. Publisher's Clearing House. Or in Vegas, where you know and are pretty certain going in, that you're going to lose.

But in something like real estate, where the person you hire is supposed to have your back, the use of fine print and asterisks seems oddly out of place. As a result, the homeowner who falls for this promise, ends up being disappointed. Feeling misled. Sometimes they feel stupid. "Why did I believe that?" they ask. In the process, they learn the truth about agents, the commission-driven business, and what many are willing to do to make the phone ring.

Then comes the next promise, "Mr. and Mrs. Homeowner, the reason we can guarantee that your home will sell fast, and for top dollar, is because of our Marketing Arsenal and proven 113-point marketing plan." Again, I can't know your gut reaction. Maybe you're impressed by the "113-point marketing plan."

Or maybe you're not.

Maybe your B.S. detector again is firing off, so loud it sounds like a howler monkey, causing a ringing in your ears and can be heard by all around you.

Maybe you say to yourself, "Really, you have a marketing arsenal? That's what you call it?" And maybe inside, or if you're more vocal, you demand to see this "113-point unicorn," to be able to scrutinize its legitimacy for yourself. Again, I can't know your response (or anyone else's) to the promises that agents make. I can only share with folks something powerful that I learned about sorting fact from fiction, truth from deception.

In his book, *How to Fail at Almost Everything and Still Win Big*, author Scott Adams outlines six filters for truth - in essence, to hone your B.S. detector. He points out that each of the six filters, individually, is a complete train wreck.

1. **Personal Experience (Human perception is iffy)**
2. **Experience of people you know (Even more unreliable)**
3. **Experts (They work for money, not truth)**
4. **Scientific studies (Correlation is not causation)**
5. **Common sense (A good way to be mistaken w/complete confidence)**
6. **Pattern recognition (Patterns, coincidences, and personal bias look alike.)**

But here is the magic of these six filters, when you use at least 2, preferably more. Adams writes, "In our messy flawed lives, the nearest we can get to truth is consistency." Consistency is the bedrock of the scientific method. Scientists creep up on the truth by performing controlled experiments and attempting to observe consistent results. In your everyday, nonscientist life you do the same thing, but it's not as impressive, nor as reliable. For example, if every time you eat popcorn, one hour later you fart so hard that it inflates your socks, you can reasonably assume popcorn makes you gassy. It's not science, but it's still an entirely useful pattern. Consistency is the best marker of truth, imperfect though it may be.

He then writes, "When seeking truth, your best bet is to look for confirmation on at least two of the dimensions listed. For example, if a study indicates that eating nothing but chocolate cake is an excellent way to lose weight, but your friend who tries the diet just keeps getting fatter and fatter, you have two dimensions out of agreement. (Three if you count common sense). That's lack of consistency."

In closing, if you have real estate needs. I urge you to utilize two or more of these filters to sort truth from deception. Identifying consistency can be your savior against the promises of deceptive agents.

Neil O'Donnell is the 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. For a free copy of his book, visit: www.FreeBookPayitForward.ca

