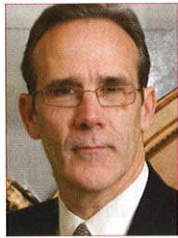




From Inertia To Engagement: A Matter Of Momentum

by Esther Muller and Michael Williams, Ph.D.



Today's economic conditions have ravaged investor confidence. From the toxic mortgage debacle to Wall Street's collapse, investors have been pummeled with devastating news and events leaving them confused, distrustful, and angry. As a result, buyers are manifesting paralytic investment behaviors. Furthermore, sales agents' ranks have been decimated by these same conditions precipitating a mass exodus of agents from the industry. The result: industry momentum has slowed to a near standstill; buyers aren't buying and agents are ill prepared to assuage buyer concerns.

Unless America's citizenry has neither future need for housing nor believes residential real estate a viable investment vehicle, the current market conditions, while problematic, are impermanent. Fortunately, impermanence enables change resulting in recovery and engagement. Unfortunately, unless investors and agents anticipate, understand, and prepare for future market changes, the current unengaged conditions may be prolonged and worsen.

So, what's needed to restore momentum, moving buyers and agents from inertia to engagement? Let's consider three perspectives offered by Peter Senge, Kurt Lewin, and Shoeless Joe Jackson.

Peter Senge: Metanoia

Futurist Peter Senge reintroduced the concept of metanoia or "shift of mind." Senge offered metanoia in the context of deep learning—learning that is both adaptive and generative. Learning that expands and enhances our personal and professional capacities. Learning that recreates us; in turn enables new and revised thinking and behavior.

Residential real estate agents must immerse themselves in learning. They cannot be baffled by the causality and dynamics of the global recession, cessation of credit, and turmoil in the financial sectors. They must learn and understand current market conditions in order to influence buyer inertia. Translating complex data for buyers in clear and concise terms demonstrates agents' mastery of the facts, trends, and issues associated with today's markets. Using a data driven approach to client engagement enables agents to segregate fact from fiction in the buying process; in turn establish a foundation of fact. This foundation can reduce or eliminate speculative discussions about market movements, which frequently disrupt and derail closing conversations.

Adopting a lifelong learning orientation to professional development may require residential real estate professionals to reflect and retool in order to succeed in the 21st century real estate environment. Learning stimulates movement from inertia to engagement.

Kurt Lewin: Transformational Change

Social psychologist Kurt Lewin conducted foundational research

in change management. From his work, a three-stage transformational change process emerged: unfreezing, cognitive redefinition, and refreezing. These influences of these concepts on sales agents' orientation towards learning can generate movement from inertia to momentum.

Unfreezing or disconfirmation occurs when the dependable and relevant constants in life are threatened. These threats—including economic, technological, or personal—destabilize personal and professional equilibrium causing anxiety. Often, with anxiety comes reflection; in turn learning and movement toward re-establishing equilibrium.

Cognitive redefinition occurs when new learning has been explored. New learning may replace old beliefs and practices. This stage evidences new or revised orientations towards professional practice and perhaps lifelong learning. They create the future today through redefining their orientation toward sales agency—a metanoia...a shift of mind.

Refreezing evidences the internalization of new learnings. The result: a professional transformation enabled by discarding unproductive thinking and behavior and replacing them with new productive practices; in turn stimulating movement from inertia to engagement.

Stan Ponte, Senior Vice President of Sotheby's International Realty, comments, "To succeed in today's challenging market, brokers must approach deal making from an entirely new standpoint. An educated, informed approach is needed to bridge the gap from interest to closing."

Shoeless Joe Jackson: "If You Build It, Be Prepared For What Comes"

In the 1989 movie *Field of Dreams*, spectral baseball legend Shoeless Joe Jackson informs farmer Ray Kinsella, "If you build it; he will come." In the movie, Jackson's reference to 'he' was Kinsella's father. In today's professional reality, if the statement were rephrased, "If you build it, be prepared for what comes," the power and potential inherent in metanoia and transformational change to enable sales agents to abandon inertia and initiate engagement are limitless.

We assert residential real estate professionals are the architects or victims of their professional future. Shoeless Joe Jackson encouraged Ray Kinsella to build. We too can build; build commitment to professional development through life-long learning.

The 21st century residential real estate market has irrevocability changed. Will you? ■

Esther Muller

Co-Founder of the Academy for Continuing Education & Master Coach

Tel: 646-391-7406

esther@realestateacademy.com

www.esthermuller.com

www.realestateacademy.com

Michael Williams, PhD

Dean of the Graduate School of Business

Division of Graduate Studies, Touro College

Tel: 973-477-6727