

A world without... you

To me, the great value in being a Broker is the opportunity to learn from so many people. In my 10 years managing offices, I have had the privilege of working with dozens of REALTORS®, each with a different take on the business of real estate. If what they say is true, that “teaching is learning twice,” then I have learned a lot by teaching some excellent people.

One of the more difficult jobs for a manager is helping agents decide whether or not this is the right career for them. Despite our best efforts as managers and trainers, sometimes someone with promise just misses the mark. In most cases, the agents themselves will be the last ones to call it quits. A few years ago, during the stronger markets, it was possible to achieve a level of success that might have encouraged some agents to stay in the business longer than was probably prudent, even when they were floundering. When this happens to an agent in one of my offices, my conversations have begun with a question. “Tell me what failure looks like to you?”

Asking this question is not pleasant, and I have to admit that I have asked many agents to leave the business before they were ready. But, for every agent I have had that final talk with, I have had 10 times that many who have become successful.

I have found over time that while most of us know what our standard of success is, we very seldom have the same awareness about our standard of failure. I can't tell you how many meetings I have been in where strategies were being built for agents, companies or associations and every outcome was being discussed except the possibility of failure. I consider this a mistake. If you do not truly consider the possibility of failure in everything you do, how can you prevent it?

In the last year however, something else has happened. For the first time I have had good, competent agents look at their own standard of success and failure and say, “tell me if I should stay in the business.” The first time

this happened, I was shocked, for it was asked by an agent who was not only promising, but showing success. The agent was discouraged by the current down cycle of this market, but eventually, we worked our way through it.

The next time the question arose was even more surprising, as it was asked by a long time, successful REALTOR®. This agent was ethical and professional, with great respect from peers and clients, but had seen deal after deal fall apart over the spring, and began to have self-doubts. I thought for a moment before I spoke, then I asked the agent to “tell me what the world looks like without you? Really, if you call it quits today, and I help you close and transfer your business, how long will that take? How many clients are in motion right now that you will have to contact? How many referrals will you need to make arrangements for? How long will people you've serviced for years be calling because you are the first one they think of when it comes to real estate? How disappointed or surprised will the next person be that you are no longer a REALTOR®? And, since this is about income, how much money will you put in someone else's pocket when you close your doors for good?”

As we worked through the answers, this person told me it would take weeks, that the number of people who would need to be contacted was uncountable and that the current business in hand right now would make sales goals for the next six months. More to the point, the agent thought people would be shocked to see this career change. My comment as I listened to these answers was, “well then, we know what to do.”

Times can be tough right now, but give yourself a break and spend your time focusing on what you are doing right. Remember why you became a REALTOR® in the first place, and what makes it work for you. And if you ever lose sight of what you've built, ask yourself what it would take to close it down. Envisioning “a world without... you,” will show you how valuable you really are. **MAR**

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REALTOR® | AUGUST 2008



by Jeff Young

West Michigan Lakeshore Association of REALTORS®