

# The Home Front

LEBLANC & ASSOCIATES

ISSUE 29 • FALL 2004

## The Front Porch

Please don't shoot the messenger! When it comes to performance evaluations of my client's agents, at times I feel I am the main target of a firing line! Some people get upset with me because sales agents' scores do not match the number of homes being sold. Well, I think I have said enough about that equation over the past year or so, i.e. it does not necessarily equate.

In the last edition of *The Home Front* I mentioned that companies that haven't assessed their sales teams in a long time, once they decided to proceed, found a few 'surprises' in the field. While my reports may be the bearer of not-so-good news, I did not create the lackluster sales presentation! During these heady times of priority list product delivery (not selling), it is easy not to bother with an assessment program. It is understandable (managing crowd control, pacing with construction, long interest lists, etc.) but it is not really acceptable. How can any professional stay on top of their game if they are not continually tested, assessed and coached?

When I speak with sales agents, I always remind them they are professionals just like athletes, musicians, doctors, etc. Does anyone think that an athlete does not need to continually refine his/her skills? Do you remember the once invincible Tiger Woods? Don't think for a minute that he isn't working on his game through practice and coaching. Pop entertainers aside, to sustain a career in music at the highest level, performance practicing is mandated for each individual. While it has been too many years to remember, I recall those painful piano lessons and recitals. I guess that is why I only lasted a couple of years!

What makes sales professionals any different? Should they ignore their selling skills just because they have more buyers than product? I am sensing a shift in the market. Those interest lists are perhaps not quite as deep as they once were. My telephone has been busier lately... managers testing their agents to determine why some homes are not moving. Most of the time it is just a case of getting back to basics. We all know what should happen: Greet / Meet / Assess / Demonstrate / Close. While an effective sales presentation is more



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comprehensive than these 4 items, they still are the foundation of any sales presentation.

Other times it is a case of attitude adjustment. Some agents just got mentally lazy. It is not that they cannot effectively sell... they just didn't *have* to for a few years and now they have allowed the easy route to become the norm. Other agents entered the market during the feeding frenzy. Their numbers look good. So they must be good agents, right? As a sales manager, you better know how good they really are beyond the numbers.

Our selling market can go in any direction. Interest rates change on a daily basis. This can cause buyers to sit on the fence. We hear of job growth and job loss. This causes uncertainty for prospective buyers. One group of experts says we are coming out of a recession. Another states we are headed for another. In some markets, housing prices have been skyrocketing. If you have an agent just saying complete a pre-qual (talk to lender first) and the buyer already feels hesitant, that lender application could scare them away. Shouldn't the agent work through the fears and hesitancy first? Sure the lender will determine income, debts, etc. But how about sales starting with the sales agent and not the lender for a change?

Call LeBlanc & Associates to evaluate your sales team and know what is going on in your sales centers. I really do like sales agents and my preference is to write the glowing reports vs. the inadequate ones. And please, no shooting allowed! ♥

## Value Building Homesite Demonstrations

By Manny Schatz, MIRM

**Home Front:** *In today's market, sales agents rarely demonstrate a production unit or homesite. Waiting and Priority Lists appear to have eliminated this part of the sales process. What is your message to agents today?*

**Manny Schatz:** A complete demonstration of the homesite is the most effective means to continue the sales process. Value-building homesite demonstrations require sales professionals to be fully prepared in understanding the idiosyncrasies of each homesite.

**HF:** *Agents understand the concept of bringing the home to life for the prospective buyer, but this is not always the case for the homesite.*

**MS:** When asking sales professionals to 'paint the picture' of how a particular homesite will live for a potential buyer, we usually receive a blank stare. For the most part, they are unfamiliar with the uniqueness of each homesite and how it compares with other homesites. The sales professional needs to help prospects visualize and 'feel' themselves enjoying the homesite and the more exciting lifestyle.

**HF:** *We have discussed the importance of discovery and assessment to determine needs and dominant buying motives (DBM). How does this apply to the homesite?*

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## Debunking The Myths – Part Eight

by Charles J. Clarke III

This is the eighth in a series of articles in which I'm looking at the most common myths about selling homes, based on an understanding of which "animal" personality you happen to be dealing with. In my BOLT System, Bulls are the bottom-line take-charge personality, Owls are analytical and detail oriented, Lambs are the people pleasers, and Tigers seek fun and excitement.

MYTH 23

**People make buying decisions based on emotion, not logical reasoning.**

Another popular myth that is a variation of this one states that men buy with logic and women with emotion. Whether buyers base their decisions on emotion or logic is not a universal principle, nor is it divided along gender lines. Lambs and Tigers are emotional animals who factor their emotional reactions into their buying decisions. Sometimes, the more significant a buying decision, the more they rely on their feelings. Meanwhile, it never occurs to Bulls and Owls to base any decisions on emotion. Bulls will establish their decision on the best available facts. Owls will take those facts and do their own additional research. Making an emotional appeal a part of your presentation to Bulls and Owls will backfire on you. Bulls could lose their respect for you and Owls might think you are pressuring them. Never assume that a prospect will base a

### Homesite Demos ...

Continued from page one

**MS:** Upon first meeting new prospects, it may be apparent which home/homesite would best suit their needs. When the sales professional has learned the prospect's DBM, he/she has created the opportunity to personalize and demonstrate how the homesite will satisfy buying desires.

**HF:** *You discussed the transition to the model home demonstration in our last edition. Does the same apply to the homesite?*

**MS:** Yes. When transitioning to the demonstration of the homesite, sales professionals should use the opportunity to predispose the prospects on what they will experience.

**HF:** *Agents sometimes can't get beyond the negative of selling a 'dog' homesite. How do agents overcome the hurdle?*

**MS:** The sales professional should use every opportunity to positively label the homesite they

buying decision on emotion or otherwise until you have determined their animal personality.

MYTH 24

**It is rare for a married person to buy a house without the other spouse present.**

True, some prospects would never consider buying a home without the presence and immediate input of their spouse. Lambs, for instance, would never presume to make a major decision alone and risk upsetting their partner. In an Owl's view, it just doesn't make good sense to make a decision without carefully considering every perspective. They will usually wait for their spouse to be present to have additional feedback and information to factor into the decision. Bulls, on the other hand, consider it a sign of weakness to need anyone's "help" to make a decision, even a big one like buying a home. They are confident in their own abilities to provide leadership and make sound decisions. And as for Tigers, sometimes the idea of waiting to consult with their mate doesn't even cross their mind. Tigers occasionally fly into a decision without stopping to think, certainly without stopping to ask the advice of their spouse.

*Charles J. Clarke III is the creator of personality based selling system, "Bulls, Owls, Lambs and Tigers": Personality Selling and Personality Marketing," and can be contacted for speaking engagements at (770) 287-7808. ♥*

are about to demonstrate. The sales professional should inspire enthusiasm and identification with the homesite for the prospects, focusing on how this specific yard area will enhance their lifestyle. Agents need to understand the negative attributes of the property as well. They can then point out the other, more positive points that usually will help to overcome the obvious negative points.

**HF:** *How can agents create urgency beyond the priority list?*

**MS:** The homesite demonstration is a great opportunity to create a sense of urgency. This site should be the 'one-of-a-kind' these prospects are seeking. It is critical that the salesperson ask at least one closing question with a call to action during the homesite demonstration.

*Manny Schatz, principal of Professional Builder Services, Inc. in Danville, has been involved in nearly every aspect of home building. He holds a general contractors license, a brokers license, and MIRM certification. In addition to his professional affiliations, Manny was an associate of The Stone Institute, and worked with the late Dave Stone. For further information, contact Manny Schatz at (925) 837-1937. ♥*

## Kudos Korner

Here is another series of agents who have demonstrated super star status during this last quarter of sales agent evaluations conducted by LeBlanc & Associates.

### BECKY BOWIE

Shea Homes

Becky is charismatic, energetic and emotes enthusiasm about her product and community. She is there to make a difference and truly wants to sell the right home to each individual. While always a professional, Becky is also a cheerleader who gathers up excitement for her community.

### ANGELINA EXHAROS

Quadrant Homes

Angelina provides her full attention to her prospective buyer. She builds excellent rapport, gently takes control of the sales process and guides the buyer through all the essential steps of a proactive sales presentation. Angelina went after the sale wholeheartedly.

### DAN RIGNEY

Veridian Homes

Dan is an exceptional sales professional. He demonstrates an outstanding ability in all areas of the sales process. He listens to the buyer's needs and preferences and then structures his presentation accordingly. Dan's sense of humor is infectious and helps him maintain great rapport.

### SHERI SWEENEY

Veridian Homes

Offering a comprehensive and effective sales presentation, Sheri's enthusiasm for her profession and her product provides a positive environment. Sheri's courteous and congenial demeanor emotes the sense of sincerely wanting to help her buyer.

### ALLAN WHITE-PENTONY

Veridian Homes

In spite of a sales office busy with a constant flow of visitors, Allan maintained a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere for his buyer. Through his effective assessment and discovery process, Allan makes the buyer feel he wants to find the home that best suits the buyer's needs and desires. He moves seamlessly through his sales presentation and positions his builder as being unique and superior to the competition.

### BRAD WAHLQUIST

Fieldstone Homes

From our Video Profile series we congratulate Brad on demonstrating excellence in his demonstrated sales skills. Brad hit every benchmark of an effective sales presentation.

**Kudos to all!**

## Leveraging BOLT Sales Training Into The Construction Process

by Dave Harding, CMP  
and Charles Clarke III, MIRM

Last two editions, we reviewed additional values of "BOLT" personality selling during the sales, option-selection, and loan processes. In this edition, we will expand the scope and provide additional value for our customers as they watch their home being built and as they require our care through to new home orientation and closing. The use of personality selling is the ultimate in respect for our customers, who are NOT all the same. Once we discover their personality (Bull, Owl, Lamb or Tiger), we can tailor all the follow up programs to suit them best.

It is important that the site sales team advise the construction team and customer service crew of the personalities of pending buyers. By knowing each personality, a better connection is possible and the relationship will be smoother all round until closing. Weekly community team meetings are a great forum for ensuring that the entire team is aware of each buyer's personality type and how best to keep them happy. I have seen sales teams create a simple matrix with homesite number, product, elevation, color scheme, then buyer names and personality types added. Even a busy site can update these weekly and distribute them to the lender, design center and construction superintendent.

People divide into four basic personality types. Certainly, many will show characteristics of more than one personality. Generally, BOLT training suggests we describe people with their top two dominant types, e.g. Lamb-Bull or Tiger-Lamb. Skilled practitioners can gauge a personality by dress, physical gestures, speech patterns, type of car, etc. Many of the old "body language" myths have now been exposed and better results can be shown after our team of professionals is exposed to current personality training.

Bulls are the most likely to hire their own subcontractors and install their own options at midnight. They are motivated by control and dominance and will respond that this is THEIR home, even if it is months before closing. Bulls will pop in from time to time and attempt to manage our workers. They will then proceed to the sales office and update their "demands." Bulls are the customers who tell us that every other home is proceeding faster than theirs. Our site sales team should pre-empt the problems and remind Bulls about the risks of unapproved installations and management of construction workers. They are the most likely to misunderstand our plans and will not accept our intent is to resolve any issues before closing. By cross-training the construc-

tion crew in personality selling, they can respond to a Bull's complaints by making the analogy to Boeing. This plane is not yet airworthy. We actually have several trained experts who identify any shortcomings and then we solve them before we take off. Moreover, there is a specific protocol regarding problem solving. We don't necessarily drop tools at all other homes in order to dash over to the Bull's home and move the misplaced thermostat he just discovered. Best practice is to make a written record, giving the Bull a copy and advising him the approximate timetable, and that we'll report back upon completion. Then we must stick to that commitment. Bulls are highly likely to complain to the City / County when they believe they are (no longer) in total control of the construction team. By being aware of who is a Bull, then managing his expectations, and our own responses, we avoid most problems.

As always, Bulls will be punctual for their orientation. They will be completely unsympathetic about last minute delays of any sort. Early and often, let Bulls know that some matters are simply out of our hands: city inspection time, utility companies on strike, nearby fires that temporarily shift road-building equipment, etc. Plan for the issue, but advise the Bull of the potential problem ... and your plan to resolve it.

Owls have a quest for logic and order. They will make regular visits to the home and prepare lists of issues or questions. They will keep copies and refer to them in subsequent visits. Owls can read plans and will. They are most likely to order engineering reports and to have outside inspections conducted. They will watch that grading is done consistent with the topo maps, grading plan, etc. They may ask for a survey to be certain that the fence is on the property line. Owls will never attempt to direct our crews but will be curious and ask many questions. Owls would like a framing walk if you can make it available, even if it is not common practice. They will take notes of what they learn, then, sometimes, make a point of "helping" inform neighbors they may meet. Owls will continually ask about warranties, and will also catalogue all these policies.

Owls expect us to build exactly according to plan and will not do any "midnight options." They are more likely to request a change order, together with sketches or schematics..

Lambs never want to confront a person nor an issue. They want to spend lots of bonding time with their new home, and they will include their family. Lambs are the most likely to leave an open window so they may come back at night and just sit in "their" home. While we find this frustrating, we should also recognize it as a buying

signal. Our construction team should be aware that Lambs might be in the home overnight, but would never, ever install their own work or do anything else that would cause anxiety for others. They are the buyers most likely to post their own little sign in front identifying that this is the future home of Susan, Richard, Devon, and Fluffy. Lambs are most likely to want to toss a few pennies into the wet slab, or to bury a lucky trinket in the yard. If they see construction flaws, Lambs are prone to leave a voice mail message in order to avoid any confrontation. Lambs should be encouraged to come back to the sales office every time they visit and the entire team should be alert to asking how they are doing.

Tigers require the least on-site maintenance on the construction front. When they do attend the site, during construction, they are likely to bring friends, family, or associates in order to show off their new home. This is very different from the motivation of the Lamb who is bringing others to share and to bond. Tigers are looking for more recognition from others and less for participation. Tigers are the most likely to ask for a change in the exterior elevation, or color scheme or other "showy" portion of the home. They could ask for changes directly from the subcontractors, but will be much less antagonistic than the Bull. Tigers are always in a hurry and will continue to ask when their homes will be ready. Tigers cannot usually read plans and are often the buyers who visit similar homes which are further along in construction. As a result, the whole team should be alert to the possibility of adding more options to the Tiger's home after she has seen these options elsewhere in the community. Tigers care what others think and will respond well if asked to remove shoes while touring another home. The community team can add net revenue by recognizing this Tiger trait.

**Next edition:** Using these personality skills to have the best handoff at the new home orientation.

*Dave Harding is a well-known sales and marketing expert based in Los Angeles. For over 20 years, his practice locations have included Washington, Arizona, Nevada and California. He has twice been acclaimed by Builder and Developer Magazine as one of Who's Who - The Industry's Finest, was twice Sales Manager of the Year in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, and is the 2004 NAHB Sales Manager of the Year. He can be reached at [dave-harding@email.com](mailto:dave-harding@email.com) or [dgharding@adelphia.net](mailto:dgharding@adelphia.net) or 310. 463. 0454.*

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## The Eyes Have It!

**SEEING IS BELIEVING.** No matter how good the selling market might be, a community's success ultimately relies on the quality of the sales agents. **Video Profiles** from LeBlanc & Associates capture your agent's entire sales presentation through the eyes of the buyer.

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**TECHNICALLY SPEAKING.** All work is done in-house so we have direct control over the entire process. We also offer our clients options including processed or non-processed formats, and VHS tapes or CD ROMS. **QUALITY.** LeBlanc & Associates has established credentials as the premiere sales agent evaluation company in the industry. We have one expertise...new home sales. Fast food restaurants, banks and car dealerships are not our game. We have the best agent capture rate around. Our people are personally trained to focus on the agent. We realize you know what your models look like! **Have you have tried the rest and found ill prepared field personnel? Have you seen more walls than agents? Do ceiling shots make you dizzy?**

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