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## The Home Front

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*The Home Front*

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# The Home Front

LEBLANC & ASSOCIATES

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## The Front Porch

**G**ood. Good timing. Good luck. Good day. Miguel de Cervantes brought up an interesting question in his novel Don Quixote de La Mancha. He queried, "Can we ever have too much of a good thing?"

I am not sure what the answer to that might be. I guess the answer depends on who asks the question. We used to go to Martha Stewart for some guidance. I guess it depends on what the good is. Can we have too much good luck? Too many good friends? Too much cheese-cake? Can our dynamite housing market be too much of a good thing? I doubt banks and investors, corporate bottom lines and sales agents commissions are considered too much of a good thing.

Prospective buyers might definitely feel we in this industry have had too much of a good thing. The thought of waiting for months on end for the possibility of having a *chance* at a home which has increased in price is probably not on their 'good thing' list.

I recently listened to an audio tape of a sales agent and couldn't believe my ears. The agent showed our person her reservation book as she discussed the lack of availability of homes and explained her long list of *investor* buyers. That was bad enough. Here comes the good part. Intending to be honest, the agent then states, "So, to me, there's not much point in you counting on it. But I wouldn't count on it for at least 6 more phases... I'd check back then." Hmmm... not a good thing at all.

So where does that leave us? We in the industry certainly want this strong market to continue. But how do we balance our financial smiles with the frustration of the buyers? After all, should this market change, those same prospective buyers just might have long memories and they will then want to implement *their* 'good thing'. You know what that is...yep, incentives. Not the closing costs kind. But the into your pocket kind. Ouch.

For those who have read this newsletter over the years, you are aware that I always stress



Mary LeBlanc, President  
LEBLANC & ASSOCIATES

the importance of earning the sale. This has been a challenge for our sales agents over the last few years. As we have previously discussed, priority list selling can be a good thing or not so good. Through our audio and video evaluations I have observed many agents who know how to earn the sale even with a priority list selling situation. They are friendly, attentive and show a sincere interest in wanting to meet the needs of a prospective buyer. They demonstrate a willingness to listen and are not afraid to sell their community and homes in spite of the remote chance of that buyer being able to purchase a home any time soon. In short, they neutralize the buyer's frustration and anger through good solid sales techniques. A warm and friendly greeting along with an effective discovery usually come into play. Is the buyer quickly acknowledged? Does the agent offer a smile and warm welcome? Is there an introduction? Is a friendly atmosphere created to allow that prospective buyer a sense of trust and a comfort zone?

As we begin the new year, let's hope we will continue to enjoy the benefits of a strong housing market. At the same time, do not forget to invest in your sales team through continual training and evaluation assessments. The assessment process is the only way to insure your agents have not fallen into a desk-sitter syndrome.

Whether it be audio evaluations or Video Profiles, give us a call. It is a *good* thing. ♥

## Meeting, Greeting and Qualifying

By Manny Schatz, MIRM

**Home Front:** *While Critical Path selling is not always followed, certain aspects of this proven sales technique are always applicable, particularly when it comes to Greeting your buyers. How important is Greeting?*

**Manny Schatz:** The Greeting is the first crucial step in Critical Path and any sales process. It predisposes the prospects' willingness to share vital information that the agent needs to optimize the probability of selling a home. It is essential in establishing that critical first impression of both the salesperson and the company they represent.

**HF:** *Most prospective buyers visit communities numerous times which turns them off to the greetings they repeatedly hear. What do you advise agents?*

**MS:** Prospects arrive fearful of being pressured and/or being subjected to a sales 'pitch.' Their standard reply is "I am just looking" or "I just want a brochure". A proper greeting is much more than the traditional handshake and exchange of names. It is a period of casual conversation intended to help create rapport, comfort, trust and confidence. It is also a period of pace setting.

**HF:** *How can sales agents avoid the rote greetings we usually hear?*

**MS:** Each visitor group should be greeted differently and appropriately. Sales professionals should have multiple and distinctive opening greetings that can be utilized and modified as the need arises.

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## Debunking The Myths – Part Five

by Charles J. Clarke III

This is the fifth in an ongoing 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 at the time. 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 14

#### **People don't buy a home in an active-adult community on their first visit.**

Conventional wisdom says that people become more conservative and cautious as they get older, and that a retired couple would be significantly less likely to buy a home after one visit than a younger couple. But just like most pieces of "conventional wisdom," this one is full of pitfalls. Buying preferences are not dictated by gender, or by age. The only determiner of when prospects are likely to buy during the selling process is their animal personality type. For example, Lambs typically require numerous visits to a model home and community before they have sufficient affirmation to sign the purchase agreement. Owls also tend to avoid hasty decisions and allow themselves large amounts of time for research and investigation before buying. Bulls and Tigers, on the other hand, are swifter decision makers. Bulls don't like to shop—they like to buy and they like to buy *now*. Tigers also are swift decision makers who prefer to buy their first visit. These specific personality attributes and buying preferences are consistent to the animal type despite gender. They are equally consistent despite age. The truth is that countless homes in active-adult communities are sold the first day. Use my techniques for determining your prospects' BOLT animal personality, then sell to them and let them buy the way *they* prefer. And that just might mean on the first day.

### MYTH 15

#### **All teenagers buy impulsively.**

Many salespeople assume that the majority of youth are irresponsible handling money and are swift, impulsive buyers. However, this myth is based on the same faulty logic as Myth 14, but in reverse. "Bulls, Owls, Lambs and Tigers®" is not age-related on either end of the spectrum. The personalities each have distinct buying preferences and habits that remain largely unchanged throughout a lifetime.

It's important to reject age-based stereotypes, which only bias and create assumptions that color salespeople's approach to their prospect.

### MYTH 16

#### **Changing your presentation from buyer to buyer is manipulative.**

Many salespeople claim that to alter their selling style and demonstration from one prospect to the next is manipulative. I have a different word in mind. Respect. You see, I believe that changing your presentation – selling differently to different prospects – is the highest form of respect. The basis of my "Bulls, Owls, Lambs and Tigers®" selling system is identifying each prospect as either a Bull, Owl, Lamb or Tiger personality type, because each has distinct buying habits and buying preferences. Being aware of your prospects' BOLT personality type and attuned to the accompanying characteristics alerts you to the selling strategies likely to be effective and ineffective. Not only does using different selling styles simply make sense in closing the maximum number of prospects, but it is (as I mentioned earlier) highly respectful of your customers. The BOLT techniques, which center around *changing* sales presentations, force salespeople to view their prospects as individuals. Generic sales pitches do not take into account the individuality of the prospects, or their wishes for the sales process. Changing your presentations and your style is not manipulative. It is simply selling to your prospects the way each of them would prefer. It is seeing them as individuals and as valuable enough to turn off the autopilot function and interact with them in their way, on their terms, and in the way they would like to buy.

### MYTH 17

#### **Women like to shop more than men.**

This popular misconception is yet another of the many variations of Myths 14 and 15. Enjoyment of shopping is personality based – not age or gender based. Bulls, for example, (young or old, male or female) do not like to shop. They like to buy, but they dislike the *process* of shopping and rarely (if ever) feel the inclination to browse or "just look." Another variable that impacts shopping enjoyment is the objective of the shopping. Some people love to shop for one kind of product, but dread the prospect of "having to" shop for another kind.

*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.* ♥

## Meeting, Greeting ...

Continued from page one

**HF: What are your thoughts on the discovery process?**

**MS:** Vital pieces of information about the prospects must be discovered in a friendly, non-intrusive fashion. The sales professional needs to determine the prospects' financial capabilities, timing and what will excite them.

**HF: Many define qualifying a prospect only in terms of financial ability, size home and timing. What else should be included?**

**MS:** To fully qualify means more than identifying needs, wants, etc. It also means discovering their Dominant Buying Motives (DBM). These are the emotional triggers for the buying decisions.

**HF: ARE the DBM triggers the only points to be discovered?**

**MS:** There are many Secondary Buying Motives that will excite the prospects about a home. Many features will generate warm and positive feelings and desire.

**HF: What are the basics for any sales professional in their greeting stage?**

**MS:** The basics are:

- Always move to greet and acknowledge new arrivals with your eyes, hand gestures and friendly comments.
- Always introduce yourself, seek the other person's name and immediately use it.
- Seek areas of common interest and establish rapport before beginning the presentation.
- Ask open-ended questions to obtain the maximum amount of valuable information.
- Listen carefully.
- Follow your customer's agenda, not yours.
- Probe for Dominant Buying Motives.

**HF: Your final thoughts on the Greeting process?**

**MS:** A buyer will know when you have their best interests at heart. Sincerity will allow your prospects to open up and share the necessary information so you can guide them to the right home for their family.

*Manny Schatz, principal of Professional Builder Services, Inc. in Danville, has been involved in nearly every aspect of home building. He holds a general contractor's 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.* ♥

## Just A Good Time or A Great Return?

by Dave Harding, CMP

I want to compliment Joe Lynch at JTL Development in Ventura California. He showed that it is possible to do good *and* do well by supporting industry recognition events.

In the 2002 ELAN awards in Los Angeles, during an acceptance speech, Joe identified his company as a midget among giants. He competes with almost all the Top 10 in the Builder 100, and does not have the deep pockets they all do. How, then, could he justify the extraordinary expense of sponsoring three tables at the legendary Beverly Hills Hotel (the crown jewel in the hotel empire of the Sultan of Brunei)? At \$5000 per table, it seemed a lavish amount to fete his colleagues and supporters.

However, Joe was not feeding his ego. He WAS feeding his team. More importantly, he fed the bottom line. Joe simply did the math.

For \$5000, he received about \$15,000 worth of tradeouts from newspapers, magazines and sign fabricators...most of whom were vendors he would use anyway in the upcoming year. Even discounting other vendors that he could not use...due to geographic or product limitations that did not promote his homes...he still received about \$10,000 of advertising savings. And, he fed 10 people at a majestic hotel. That he won significant honors in their presence was an even bigger dividend.

Joe knew he would be committing to major advertising in the ensuing year and could collect an impressive return on his \$5000 per table. (If only homebuilding paid similar 100% yields in the first year!)

There is a lesson here. Watch for the available

contras. Calculate which ones you could actually use. Quantify the value of those credits. Figure the cost of purchasing a table, or half table, etc. Because of excellent support from major metropolitan newspapers (in this case the *L.A. Times*, *The Daily News*, and the *Ventura County Star*) and the mighty participation of *Home Buyers Guide*, builders who will be advertising significantly during the period can easily justify these investments. And they can be visible supporters of their industry. And they can honor their team (including spouses and consultants) in a respectful focused agenda.

In the case of Los Angeles, the organizers and sponsors agreed to have the tradeouts transferable. Thus, those that are unable to use credits for The Signal may be able to trade them with another company in order to use double the credits of The Argonaut. If your HBA/SMC has not considered transferability of tradeouts, you might suggest it to them. It will increase the useable value of the bundle of benefits acquired in purchasing a table for these events.

JTL and Joe showed that there is no reason for smaller builders to be overwhelmed by the Leviathans of our industry. And he showed that not all good ideas originate with the Builder 10. Congratulations, Joe.

*David Harding, CMP is Vice-President of Sales & Marketing of Western Pacific Housing, a DR Horton Company in Los Angeles. He is a nationally-recognized expert in training, leading and motivating sales & marketing teams into excellence. He has twice been acclaimed as Sales Manager of the Year for Los Angeles & Ventura Counties, and a member of Who's Who – The Industry's Finest in CA, NV, and AZ. He was honored as the top sales manager in CA, NV and HI for 2003 and has received numerous distinctions throughout several states and Canadian provinces. He can be reached at dharding@uphi.com or by phone at 310. 463. 0454.*

## Now What?

Several of my accounts who have ordered our **VIDEO PROFILES** have asked me the most effective way to use them with their sales team. Once they receive the tape or CD ROM for viewing, they are not sure what the next step should be.

There are many ways to effectively utilize your video evaluations. One is by using our Self Evaluation Guide. Another is to use your best agent's video in a sales meeting as a training video. What better way can agents learn what to do than from one of his/ her peers?

If you would like to discuss the follow-up portion of your video profile series, just give me a call.

## Kudos Korner

*These agents have super star status during this last quarter of evaluations conducted by LeBlanc & Associates.*

### STEVE DANFORTH

*Dummore Homes*

Steve's relaxed demeanor and great sense of humor enable him to elicit valuable buyer information. Steve addresses concerns straight on and offers sensible and simple solutions.

### JULIE O'LEARY

*Western Pacific Housing*

Julie demonstrated solid sales skills including building product value, excitement and urgency into her presentation without being over powering.

### LISA DYLUS

*Western Pacific Housing*

Julie offers high-level of personal service to her prospective buyers. After obtaining essential needs information, Lisa then focuses her presentation to meet those needs and preferences.

### SHARON DUNN

*Richmond American Homes*

Sharon controls the flow and direction of a sales presentation, mixing her extensive product knowledge with a warm and friendly personality. Sharon superbly handled potential objections up front.

### YVE BALASA

*Pulte Homes*

Yve demonstrated a clear and focused structure, leading her buyer first to a home style, then a site, then financing, and then asked for the sale!

### CINDI VAN METER

*Pulte Homes*

Cindi creates friendly conversations that lead to important discovery questions. She handles objections with ease and maintains a positive attitude and an eagerness to assist her buyers.

### JAMES BONGATT

*Centex Homes*

James articulates the advantages of his product well. He is approachable, professional and friendly.

### MARIA MENDOZA

*McMillin Homes*

Maria exhibits excellent listening skills by incorporating discovered information back into her conversation with her buyer.

### MAUREEN BITTRICK

*Cambria Homes*

Maureen quickly assesses her buyer's needs and preferences with confidence and is not afraid to use trial closing questions.

### LINDA AMBEAU

*Tanamera Homes*

Linda uncovers her buyers needs during a model home tour. She then personalizes her presentation. Her knowledge was impressive.

**Kudos to all!**