



Be spellbinding: consider influence, persuasion and "enchantment" in real estate

April 14, 2015 - Front Section

The real estate community is grounded in establishing and maintaining meaningful industry relationships. In a business context, those connections often become the source of referrals and working partnerships, which must be managed to achieve parties' immediate business goals while avoiding potential for irreparable strains to relations. Thus, when considered in the right light, influence and persuasion are worth a real estate professionals time to think about.

Like many professions, real estate has a place for exhibiting skill in influence and persuasion. In fact, an understanding and grasp of persuasion and influence can be important in achieving success in real estate, be it through negotiation or developing business. However, by this, I mean the ability to evaluate, cultivate and nurture one's likeability, truthfulness and trustworthiness. To be clear, persuasiveness and influence should not be confused with unprofessional or illegal behavior. The industry and its regulators have no tolerance for reprehensible behavior, including but not limited to efforts to mislead, manipulate, or defraud clients, colleagues or the public. Moreover, if clients, colleagues, and industry professionals find it difficult to trust or like you as a result of perceived unprofessional behavior, aren't the end business results (or lack there of) obvious? Thus, we always want to consider influence and persuasion through legal and ethical filters, and err on the side of caution if questions of impropriety arise.

While the select few are naturally disarming, many of us are forced to work at becoming more engaging and charming. Again, here, we are not just talking about charisma, but more about the simple ways in which we can improve every day interactions; how we conduct ourselves and work together in the industry to achieve business results. How truthful was my last email correspondence? Was my demeanor and language appropriate on the phone? Did I act professionally with the client and business associates at the meeting, so as to help the parties move the deal forward? There is often a business reason to be persuasive and achieve an end goal, but do we also hold ourselves accountable for the means we employ to influence others? If we had a construct to evaluate the issue regularly, maybe that would help.

Not surprisingly, these types of questions and concerns have been considered from all angles by entrepreneurs, experts and academics. In particular, there have been numerous books written and self-help aids produced to assist us in becoming more persuasive and influential. Such resources range from Dale Carnegie's well-known "How to Win Friends and Influence People," first published in the 1930s to more recent works like Guy Kawasaki's "Enchantment: The Art of Changing Hearts, Minds and Actions." For instance, Kawasaki's espoused theory of enchantment talks about organizations and individuals' abilities to change peoples' minds, hearts, and actions. To over generalize, Kawasaki links a company or individual's persuasiveness and influence to their likeability, trustworthiness, and strength of product or service. In some of his talks, Kawasaki boils

each key theme down to an easily digestible and implementable talking point. For example, "Likeability" can be improved by smiling big (with your eyes and mouth), ensuring a good handshake, and dressing as equals with those that you meet or work with. "Trustworthiness" can mean defaulting to a "yes" attitude by putting the client or customer's goals to the forefront and working to create and enlarge markets because a "rising tide lifts all boats." Providing a great product or service can counterbalance weaknesses in the other two areas when weighed together. However, ultimately, transparency and honesty are key tenets to realizing improvements and becoming more persuasive.

One related topic I recently scanned was that of ethical persuasion. The notion of ethical persuasion is sometimes explained as the way in which an individual exhibits respect, understanding and fairness towards the situation of another, then explains one's own viewpoint, and works to achieve a resolution. The notion of ethical persuasion may offer real estate practitioners a neat framework in which to evaluate day-to-day professional interactions and business communications.

The Public Relations world has long thought about the theory of ethical persuasion and its scholars have offered a number of models for evaluating the idea and similar concepts. In one such instance, a five principle test was developed. In Baker & Martinson's 2001 article entitled "The TARES test: Five principles for ethical persuasion" published in the Journal of Mass Media Ethics, PR professionals are asked to evaluate communications according to:

- * Truthfulness of the message
- * Authenticity of the persuader
- * Respect for the persuadee
- * Equity of the appeal
- * Social responsibility for the common good

If all five principles are respected in a communication, it meets the ethics for persuasive practice. For fun, try applying this test generally to your communications and correspondence with clients and colleagues or to your website, advertising, marketing, and public reports.

At Agorafy, we want our platform to help catapult your real estate influence to new heights through access to accurate information. We are real estate and technology professionals working to build a digital home for the real estate community. Thus, your worries are our worries (speaking of which, always feel free to tell us more about them at hello@agorafy.com). Agorafy is about influencing the real estate industry through improved transparency and the democratization of high quality data and information. Our goal is to provide an open platform for real estate professionals to broadly market commercial and residential property, research current market dynamics, and quickly connect with colleagues and clients around authentic real estate information. The real estate industry is, then, better able to leverage improved information and connectivity to amplify its economic impact on communities and spur commerce and growth. Hopefully, you are now spellbound and come check us out at www.agorafy.com. We can't thank you enough and look forward to serving you!!!

Richard Du is the founder and CEO of Agorafy, New York, N.Y.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540