



the final word - JOHN JOHNSTON CEO

SECRET AGENTS AND SCARLET PIMPERNELS

As the rigours of time and active competition takes their toll on mind and body, the temptation for real estate agents to step back from the selling coal-face for the less stressful and potentially more lucrative environment of managing sales teams and assistants becomes more and more compelling. Agents who make the switch can extend careers by many years, even decades. What the switch does anything but extend however, are benefits to the consumer, quite the reverse.

Agents who choose to go down this route (usually for health or wealth reasons) know that their effectiveness in the marketplace becomes at best very much diluted, if not lost completely. They also know that this truth cannot get out. They therefore become very creative in inventing ways to project the complete opposite impression, falsely promoting the 'advantages' of working with an agents team and no longer just with the agent they hired.

The sales skills vital to the sales process that good agents have worked on perhaps for the best part of their adult life to obtain simply cannot be delegated nor duplicated in any manner. Sellers who hire 'name' agents on the strength of past reputations from when they were still selling personally can find themselves buying a hollow promise. Yes, they may get the name, and cheaply, but they no longer get the benefit of the full range of skills of the agent. The time-consuming administrative realities of running a team preclude the agent from having any real time to handle their sale in person. There remains however a number of great agents around Australia and the world who still front up in person, day after day, to list, show and sell amazing amounts of real estate and in the most effective manner. There are not many of them, but nor has there ever been. These are agents who know that nothing can replace focused, rapport building face to face contact between a professional agent and a buyer or seller.

As if to exacerbate this short-sighted real estate trend, as technology has advanced and offered up enticing 'short cuts' to the sales process, many agents in the industry have to varying degrees overcompensated and come to rely on technology far more than personal ability and have rashly and randomly applied largely

untried, impersonal gadgetry to virtually every aspect of real estate sales.

Somewhere out there in the midst of all of this electronic smoke and mirrors mayhem is a lost, lonely and somewhat confused consumer who simply wants to sit down face to face with someone whom they feel they can trust to discuss their needs and have them professionally attended to. Gadgets have their place and great agents use them very effectively - but only to add value to existing value, not as a replacement for it. So lies the opportunity for the agent who wants to make a mark today. People don't want a cyber agent to work for them, they want a competent agent, who also happens to have technological competencies.

People do business with people. When someone calls to speak to an agent, that is precisely what they should get. They don't want a droning recording of how great a company is or to be asked if they have tried some new service that the company now offers. Nor do they want a convoluted set of instructions from a digitised voice on how to locate their agent. They simply want timely access to the agent.

The very best sales agents the world over go to great lengths to ensure that they are available to handle each and every listing and selling appointment personally (including their personal attendance at open houses). They do this because they know that such face to face contact is the key ingredient to getting the best sales outcome and this can never be delegated (if they take their clients interests seriously).

The buying and selling public are right to view the increasing trend of 'remote control' sales agents as fundamentally wrong. If you were to hire a great lawyer or doctor to personally handle a very serious matter and you were handed off to a lesser qualified person, how would you feel? The responsibility of people's life savings is an extremely serious matter and should be treated as such. If real estate agents wish to continue to be highly valued and paid, they must ensure that they continue to be worth it.