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CHUCK TALK: One type of ego gets in the way, another drives you

A mortgage officer stays competitive even when it's tough

BY CHUCK MACHE

In my last column, I wrote about the pitfalls of letting our ego get in the way of our productivity when we let meaningless issues take our energy down a negative path.

I used examples such as not getting enough attention from our boss, feeling slighted by being left out of meetings, our struggle with receiving constructive criticism and the excuses we make when things don't go our way, which are designed to avoid embarrassment or cover our disappointment.

Like the headline said, "Too often, our ego gets in the way of moving forward." The point being, if you add up all the events in a day that can bother us, they are usually insignificant matters that are related to our tender egos.

What about the flip side? Instead of ego getting in the way, how can we use it to our advantage? Isn't a strong ego required to take you to the next level of whatever you do? Theoretically, the next level is a difficult place to get to; therefore you had better be tough and willing to do things that most people will shy away from. Doesn't that take a strong, ego-driven individual?

I have a friend who is a top-producing loan officer in the mortgage industry. Unless you've been living under a rock, you know that anything in the real estate-related world has been a tremendous challenge in recent times.

The mortgage industry is a perfect example. Fewer homes sold equal fewer loans. Tighter guidelines equal fewer people able to qualify. Higher interest rates mean fewer people refinancing. Bottom line, it's a difficult time and we're at a point that only the tough are surviving. If you aren't completely dedicated to the profession with a tightened and revamped marketing plan, you are struggling and soon to be in a new career. That is why, like in real estate, we are seeing fewer and fewer salespeople. The "caretakers" are seeking a new place to dwell.

Enough TVs for a retail store

In any event, while visiting my friend's home recently, I was amused by the number of flat-screen TVs that he had. There was one in each of the following: family room, living room, home office, three bedrooms, garage and yes, the master bathroom.

I counted eight TVs in total. I mean, that's a small retail outlet; some serious viewing pleasure. While we were in the garage, he pointed to the TV and said, "I just won that one in a contest at work. I was the top producer last month." It was smaller than all of the others and he explained to me that it was of lesser quality. "It's a cheap one," he said, "but I love it."

I then listened to a play-by-play recap of his entire last month of sales that earned him this little flat-screen TV. I listened to his recapping of sales numbers that were not far from a year ago. Trust me when I tell you that he knew his numbers. Forget the commissions that he may have made, it was the TV and winning the contest that drove him. He was glowing.

Later I would reflect on his competitive spirit, his enthusiasm, his confidence and his overall attitude. Doesn't he understand that he is in a shrinking market with shrinking opportunity? The answer is, no. He doesn't.

In fact, he rejects all thinking that would even consider the idea that he may not be more successful now than in the past. His ego will not allow him to think otherwise. His ego is driving him to do what others will never even attempt: thrive in a down market.

While it is true that our egos can very much get in the way of our productivity, I've never met a single super successful individual in any business that didn't have a big ego that required feeding. And in order to be fed, they are willing and able to handle rejection, small failures and setbacks that would crush most normal people.

It is their ego that has them competing in the arena of over achievement, and they are driven to go to lengths beyond the norm to be successful, even for little TVs they don't really need.

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