

The Gift of a Shift

by Gary Keller



A 1979 graduate of Baylor University's Hankamer School of Business,

where he earned a BBA in Marketing and Real Estate, Gary Keller is co-founder and chairman of Keller Williams Realty – the fourth largest real estate franchise company in North America. He is a best-selling author of a series of titles that includes, *The Millionaire Real Estate Agent*; *The Millionaire Real Estate Investor*; *FLIP: How to Find, Fix and Sell Houses for Profit*; and the recently released, *SHIFT: How Top Real Estate Agents Tackle Tough Times*. In 2007, Gary Keller's \$5 million donation to Baylor University established the Keller Center for Research in Residential Real Estate Sales and Marketing.

leadership perspective ▶▶▶



Much has been made of the recent real estate market downturn. As the media decries the dismal state of the real estate industry, it's been very eye-opening for me to observe the countless agents who have continued to thrive in this market. For many, 2007 and the first half of 2008 have been the most productive phases in their real estate careers.

It's amazing how some people always manage to find the opportunity in whatever obstacles they stumble upon. When we are in the midst of hard times, it's difficult to view challenging circumstances as anything but burdensome. It tends to only be in retrospect that we realize the gifts that grew out of the disruption. How much more productive our lives could be, if we were able to recognize those gifts in the moment.

I received an email from the team leader of our real estate office in Ann Arbor, Mich. On the outskirts of Detroit, which tends to top the list of the hardest hit real estate markets in the United States, the Ann Arbor market center had a record-breaking month in June 2008. For those who are steeped in a sense that the production and profits ebb and flow with market ups and downs, a report such as this is nothing short of mystifying. How are the agents at our Ann Arbor market center, and other agents like them, managing to soar when the market appears to be shooting holes into high hopes for the year?

It was this question that led me, along with my co-authors, Dave Jenks and Jay Papasan, to turn our focus to the creation of our latest book, *SHIFT: How Top Real Estate Agents Tackle Tough Times*. What we discovered as we filtered through the collective wisdom of some of the most powerful and inspiring real estate professionals in North America is that among the winners in business – or in life for that matter – market conditions tend to be a mere detail, not the determiner of success. The common thread among top achievers is a commitment to seize and to make a contribution within the framework of current realities. We built the book around the fundamentals for surviving, thriving and emerging from this market stronger than ever before, realizing that this market is probably one of the greatest short-term challenges and yet also one of the greatest long-term opportunities that real estate agents may ever face in their careers.

Indeed, successful people are always and relentlessly shifting. Either in response to the market or their own goals, high achievers don't hold on to the past. Problems to solve and challenges to overcome are simply a part of life. The real difference between people is in how they deal with them. If you want

to make problems lessen or have less of them, I suggest you learn to become comfortable with being uncomfortable. Learn to shift.

You'll be clearer if you always think of any shift as a shift of choice. You will rarely get to pick the circumstances, but you will always get to choose what to do about it. So if the market shifts, you're shifting. And if the market isn't shifting, you're shifting. In other words, to be your best, you can't be shiftless. You're not going to rest on your past or assume that your future is set. To reach your truest potential you are going to become like a priceless diamond and always apply the necessary pressure to harden and shine. And no matter the market, you choose to enjoy the ride. The good and the bad, the hard and the easy all work together to shape the person you become.

As Abe Lincoln said, "Nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." Many real estate agents are currently experiencing the "Gift of the Shift" and perhaps more than one. Whether we see the current circumstances as full of difficulty or full of opportunity, they will most likely turn out exactly as we see them. In the end, we determine the times by our choices. Our choice can be to either try to avoid the realities and wish they



Success never comes to the chosen few, but the few who choose. These can be the best of times; these can be the worst of times. You get to choose.

weren't true, or to embrace the opportunities they offer.

By choosing to embrace opportunity, you're choosing to shift.

Keep in mind that average is as average does. Good is as good does. And great is as great does. What you do is who you become.

A lot of people struggle with this concept. They truly don't understand that if they want to achieve at a certain level, that they must think, act and organize their lives accordingly. It's really that simple.

I believe it is thoughts before actions and actions before results. This means unless you're counting on a lot of luck, you must think and act like what you desire before you'll ever get it. So, in other words, it's thoughts plus actions then results – in that order.

I was visiting with a real estate agent recently, and as I truly got a sense of what he was capable of I made this comment: "I think you're a \$50-million-dollar a year producer masquerading as a \$1 million dollar a year producer." He was shocked and asked what I meant and I said "all I mean is that you appear to have amazing potential, but you're thinking and acting like a \$1 million dollar producer." I told

him he was underperforming because he was under acting. I said, "If you want to grow to the next level you better start acting your wage."

Real estate is a cyclical business, and to be successful in real estate over the long haul, you need to not only accept that truth, but embrace it, prepare for it and find the opportunities in it. Your determination, your preparation and your implementation will put you on the right path to your goals. You will consistently be in step with the consumer and ahead of your competition. Others may see things as good times and bad times. You will always see them as opportunity time.

One of the greatest myths ever perpetrated is the belief that you succeed your way to success. This isn't true. In fact, just the opposite is true. You fail your way to success. Everyone fails. The ones who succeed are the ones who keep going. The ones who fail are the ones who don't.

Zig Ziglar was right when he said "a big shot is a little shot that just kept shooting." Everyone falls down, but not everyone gets up. The trick in life is to get up. The world won't judge you by your failures, but by how many times you get back up.

Thanks

to a generous donation of \$5 million from Gary Keller, founder and chairman of Keller Williams Realty International, Baylor University established The Keller Center for Research in Residential Real Estate Sales and Marketing in March of 2007. The Center focuses its studies on the factors that influence individual home buyers in their decisions, as well as marketing and management issues that are important to real estate agencies and small businesses.

The faculty associated with the Center will generate research in areas yet untouched by academia, finding real answers to age-old questions about buyer-seller relationships. The Keller Center supports an academic major in Professional Selling.

The Keller Center for Research in Residential Real Estate Sales & Marketing

www.baylor.edu/business/kellercenter

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