

**A Message from the President of the Youngstown Columbiana Association of REALTORS®**

**BUYING A HOME ONLINE JUST ISN'T ALL IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE**

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Released November 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2021



I get it! Technology is great and the internet, along with eCommerce sites like Amazon, has brought the world together in a global marketplace. Trust me, with the holidays approaching, I feel like I might as well offer the Amazon, USPS, UPS or FedEx drivers a room in our home they are here so often. But not everything translates well to an online sales environment. Some things, you just have to see for yourself. They have to feel like they are yours and when it comes to highly involved purchase decisions, like, oh...say....BUYING A HOME, there is no online experience that can replace what a REALTOR® offers you in person. Think I'm wrong?

Zillow, arguably, one of the world's largest digital real estate companies, announced earlier this month that they are closing their doors to their home buying division. The company that showcases homes and allows you to compare, contrast and even contact agents to set up appointments, tried to convert to an actual brokerage and, in 3-years, called the movers and packed up.

You have gotten to know me well enough to know that I am not an, "I told you so," type of person. OK, who am I kidding? I told you so!

The company, in a press release on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, cited significant reduction in earnings in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, despite home prices being the highest they have ever been and interest rates being as low as they have ever been, causing homes to continue to sell in record time. So, how is this possible?

According to Zillow's CEO, Rich Barton, the release stated that the closer of their home buying division, Offers, and the layoff of 25% of their staff was because, "The unpredictability in forecasting home prices far exceeds what we anticipated."

Last year in an article, I addressed how the in-person experience of using a REALTOR® to buy or sell your home is still the best way to ensure your purchase is perfect for you. While technology improves our lives in a great variety of ways, there is no replacement for human interaction in any transactions. Orders still need to be processed and packaged by someone. Your gifts for the holidays need to be delivered by someone. And, when it comes to real estate, a REALTOR® is still the best way to find your home sweet home.

Your REALTOR®, thanks to the help of the Youngstown Columbiana Association of REALTORS®, not only predicted the market movement, but has been able to meet the demand for buyers and sellers. Their local knowledge and connections more useful and beneficial than any connection to a server or processor. While their knowledge and expertise far outweigh the computing power and connectivity of an online option, the best reason they will always be the best option for buying or selling your home is because of the emotional component that you get to share when you successfully complete your transaction. You can't smile with a confirmation screen, you can't hug an email and you can't celebrate with a device.

This is more than a transaction; it is a large decision that impacts everyone in your life. Trusting it to an algorithm, an online form or someone sitting behind a screen in Phoenix to tell you what your home in Warren, Youngstown, Canfield or Columbiana is worth just doesn't seem like the most personal way your biggest purchase should be handled.

But like I always say, I'm biased. However, as a proud member and President of YCAR, representing REALTORS® across the Mahoning Valley, I'd like to say to each and every one of the real estate agents who proudly serve our area, "THANK YOU!" Technology will evolve and make our lives more convenient but it will never replace, replicate or reconfigure the most important part to any real estate transaction....YOU!

*Patrick Burgan is the 2021 President of the Youngstown Columbiana Association of REALTORS®*