

SOLD on newspapers

I bought a house a few weeks ago. Some may consider that risky in an uncertain market. After reading the articles saying real estate sales had dropped by 50% and auctions were passing in two thirds of properties, we saw and seized our opportunity.

But it begs the question, should you advertise in an uncertain market?

When the economy starts to falter, businesses naturally rush to cut expenses, but experts say a downturn is the time to re-evaluate, shift and even beef up your marketing efforts.

In these uncertain times, the familiar is necessary – we turn to what we trust and know. Newspapers continue to be the place where over 1.6million New Zealanders turn to get the full story, current information on the market and a better understanding of the world around them everyday. The latest Nielsen readership figures show all New Zealand's major newspapers holding steady, with the New Zealand Herald increasing its readership across all days of the week.

Newspapers were our major source for keeping informed about the property market and deciding when our time was to pounce (it was our strategy to get in on the down). Initially we used the internet to get a grip of the vast amount of houses for sale, but we quickly realised that these sites were in fact out-of-date. Quite simply, when left up to real estate agents to keep their online listings up-to-date, they don't. In a toughening market where they need to be working extra hard to get the sale, their attention is on the streets making a deal as opposed to sitting at their computer updating listings. Newspapers had the latest listings. Circling potential properties with a pen worked more effectively in finding our dream home, as opposed to printing off reams of one-page summaries of (sold) properties.

Our newspaper readership did not stop once we found our 'old girl' (yes she's in desperate need of TLC). We found ourselves devouring every article and ad on interest rates, finance, credit capers and the reserve bank. We circled Kiwi bank's ad when they dropped their interest rate to 8.99% and used as a bargaining tool with our broker. We also analysed Mr Bollard's recent tax 'benefits' and its implications on our budget, thanks to the in-depth story in the paper.

Our reading highlighted the many homeware sales – from Briscoes' weekly inserts to Bond + Bond's MASSIVE whiteware sale....we compared prices and deals and considered buying products that we didn't really need. Newspapers' ability to motivate readers into action was well proven on Sunday afternoon when we found ourselves at Wairau Park handing over a few thousand dollars for a new fridge, dryer and microwave. "Best we spend it before the bank gets it", we heard ourselves saying as we swiped our credit card through the machine (temporarily forgetting the articles on New Zealand's credit crisis).

With financial institutions going under at every turn of the page, the housing market correcting itself, an election looming and the rising cost of living, consumers are turning to brands they can rely on and trust – like newspapers. So companies that keep their names in the public eye during a downturn are more likely to be perceived as successful, enduring and solid.

Speaking of enduring, I'm using the old newspapers to wrap up my kitchen crockery and glassware. By the time you read this though I'll be well settled into my new home, hopefully with glass of wine in hand reading the paper searching for a new economical vehicle...it's never ending.