
Marz Homes looks to cyberspace marketing to move properties

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SPECIAL TO THE BAY OBSERVER

Construction workers tend to be hard working trades people. Not many of them have a Bachelor of Science degree. Perhaps that's why the Vice President of Marz Homes tends to "think outside the box."

Danny Gabriele is doing a couple of interesting things. Firstly, in this climate of economic slowdown, he's building brand new homes in Ancaster. Secondly, he'll be using some ground-breaking technology to sell them.

To lay the groundwork, let's get an idea of the housing market in the Golden Horseshoe right now. According to Sue Aitken from Royal LePage, the downturn in the economy is nothing new. "We've been through these markets before. I've been doing this for 25 years, I've gone up and down and you just have to work harder and

smarter."

Aitken says prices are up from last year, and sales are up as well, but the bad news: the volume is down a whopping 35%. She'd rather see more houses selling for less. It keeps more people working.

Eight months ago would have been a better time for Marz Homes to put up the "For Sale" signs on their new homes. Freehold townhomes are in the \$230,000 range, Detached homes likely \$400,000 and up. But back in the spring of 2008, the land wasn't ready, the installation of utilities wasn't complete, so it would have been hard to give a completion date to prospective buyers. So they held off and waited to do it right. But even with the current economic squeeze people are looking and buying. It's just taking longer because many who are looking for a brand new home, have to sell their current houses and

the resale market is dragging.

So Danny Gabriele is looking eagerly at a new market. Young adults say in the 20-35+ age group. They're coming out of school, have no houses to sell and are part of the younger generation that wants it all and they want it now. Enter Perspective Marketing from Oakville. They have a hot new advertising plan that is fresh out of Japan. Gabriele jumped on it immediately.

Without getting overly technical, for a few years now Japanese consumers, especially young adults have taken shopping with their cell phones. It's called "Quick Response" or "QR codes". Specially made magazine ads, bus shelters and billboards carry a bar code. If the reader wants more

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information, they just aim their cell phone camera at the advertisement. It reads the code and downloads a page of pertinent information or opens a web site. Instant interest meets instant information. Gabriele will begin his outdoor advertising campaign next month. "We'll put them (bus shelter ads) around McMaster where younger people will see them, and want more information. They'll pull out their phones and zap!"

Many new phones are already equipped with QR technology. Older phones can download the software for free. Marz Homes is one of the first businesses in North America to embrace the new technology, but with many entrepreneurs not happy with traditional advertising, and looking for new ways to stick out among the crowd, you can bet the idea will spread quickly.