

The STINKIN' Housing Market

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The housing market STINKS, there's no question about that. Unless of course you happen to be a buyer, in which case, the market's conditions smell amazingly SWEET. *'It's a buyer's market,'* is what we keep hearing. While the overall market stinks, its created preferable conditions for those in a position to buy. In fact, it probably can't get any better. The combination of all-time low interest rates, dramatically reduced home prices, and low building material prices means that new home affordability is about as good as it'll get.

Builders throughout the country have made different attempts to bring traffic through the communities in which they build. Sometimes just getting folks to show up at the model is all it takes to get a buyer commitment. Other times, like now, it doesn't matter how great the deal is – they've heard the market's bad, and in the end, they miss out on a great opportunity.

In their efforts to draw homebuyer interest, Coolman Communities of Porter County, IN has gone over and beyond the traditional realm of home building savvy and is exploring creative new tactics to help people recognize their opportunities. Coolman confronted the housing market situation head on with their new marketing campaign which kicked off last February. Through their ASKCOOLMAN campaign, the company marketed itself as a resource for folks considering the purchase of a new home. It included questions about buying a home which were advertised on billboards and printed in local newspapers. The campaign also featured a micro site to retrieve the answers to the advertised questions.

But with the continued market slump, and some builders being forced to close their doors, Coolman felt it needed to help prospective homebuyers realize the 'buyer's market' situation won't last long. The builder wanted to encourage people to act now on the available markdowns. "We've discounted to the point that we can't discount anymore. We've gone as low as we can go," said Bob Coolman, President of Coolman Communities,

The traditional company is well known by its clients and vendors for its upfront customer approach. In fact, it's that very characteristic that keeps clients coming

back to the builder for their second and third Coolman home. So, Coolman thought, what better way to plan their marketing than with the same honesty tactic mixed with a little humor.

And so, in May, Coolman introduced Part 2 of their campaign: **The Housing Market STINKS - Take advantage of it.** Included in the design, is a bald, bug-eyed character surrounded by flies to signify the “stink” reference. That’s it. The message was clear, direct, and to the point.

Coolman has been running the “STINKS” ad in CineMedia at the new Valparaiso Commons Theater in Valparaiso, IN, in local newspaper ads and on billboards outside their communities. While not everyone was excited about the message, the campaign has worked. The point was, and continues to be, that if you’re not part of the ‘buyer’s market,’ the market does, in fact, STINK. But if you’re in a position to buy, then it smells pretty good - and you need to TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT, because there are sweet smelling deals to be had.

Despite the market, activity has been surprisingly strong in Coolman’s Communities. The builder attributes some of that success to the effectiveness of the STINKS campaign. “It’s accomplished what we were hoping for,” Coolman said. Since the start of their ’08 campaign, the builder has sold twice as many homes as they did in the last half of 2007. Coolman also credits their success to the quality of their homes which include:

- 5 Star Energy Rated (U.S. Government Energy Star Program)
- “Certified Green Built” (Indiana/NAHB GreenBuilt program.)
- Award winning Customer Care program
- “Value Engineering” for delivering the most home for your dollar.

Each Coolman home is also built in a neighborhood or community that is close to shopping and services. In fact, many are situated in “walk to” locations to avoid driving. Most of their homes are eco-friendly and are designed to protect and preserve the environment.

Coolman said while they realize the STINKS campaign was blunt in its message and have gotten a little push-back from some of the residents in their communities, the point is that their communities are GREAT– it's the market that STINKS. Bob Coolman thinks the best way to deal with the market situation is to “Get real and have a little fun.” But, as always, Coolman tries to be sensitive to its customers – so, beginning immediately, the **STINK** ads will now read **The Housing Market isn't Great**.

So, is the housing market on the verge of *smelling better*? Well, not exactly, at least not from a seller's perspective. But from a buyer's perspective, it's NEVER SMELLED SWEETER. But Coolman doesn't think it will last. With climbing fuel, commodity prices (like metals), production and delivery fees, once the market turns, the market will STINK for buyers as well. It's a situation Coolman would like to avoid, given the choice, but it's the reality of things to come.

To avoid the STINK and come out “smelling like a rose,” visit one of the Coolman Communities' neighborhoods as soon as possible. Follow “**The Housing Market isn't GREAT**” signs to find a sweet smelling deal that's right for you.

For a current list of stinkin'-great deals, visit Coolman Communities online at ASKCOOLMAN.com or visit our model homes, Saturdays and Sundays 1-4pm. For an appointment call 219-464-7510.