Realtor Convention & Expo Report — Drinking from Yet Another Fire Hose

Those of us who traveled to San Diego last week for the National Association of Realtors annual convention and trade show really lucked out on the weather, leaving before the snowstorm began and returning after it ended.

I did attend one of the educational sessions, and I did enjoy several non-real estate activities such as visiting the Wild Animal Park and cruising San Diego Bay. But, for me, the major value of such conventions is the “expo” — the opportunity to get current on technology and products being introduced. In that regard, the NAR convention is the “daddy of them all.”

I had an ordinary cell phone — no email, no web capability, nothing at all, compared to today’s smartphones. Nowadays, it’s hard to imagine being a successful Realtor® without a smartphone. My wife, Rita, who is not in real estate, now realizes that she, too, must discard her cell phone and get an iPhone. I heard this weekend that there are 50 million iPhones in use today.

In a previous column I mentioned Zillow’s great iPhone app which, curiously, Zillow was not promoting at their booth. Other vendors, however, offered something Zillow doesn’t offer — a branded MLS IDX search engine.

What will make such an app unbeatable will be a GPS component which allows you to search the MLS listings closest to where you are standing with your phone.

There were other technologies being promoted, of course, but the iPhone has definitely captured everyone’s attention and imagination — and with good reason.

Taking it all in at one trade show is like drinking from the proverbial fire hose — it’s simply impossible to do justice to what I learned this weekend. It’s only appropriate that the same kinds of technology allowed me to be completely in touch with my clients and business throughout the convention and expo. Indeed, I sold one of my listings while I was in San Diego.

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