

# Better Austin Living

*News You Can Use from Your Friend in the Real Estate Business*

## Our Lives Change When ...


"Our lives change when our habits change." That is a quote from one of my favorite authors and speakers, Matthew Kelly. I have written about him in my book review column a couple of times. One of the points that he always tries to drive home is that we will never see any lasting productive change in our lives unless we adopt better habits.

At this time of the year (over the past couple of years) I've tried to focus on determining what daily and weekly habits are going to take me to where I want to go over the course of the year. One of the fallacies of goal setting (in my opinion) is that it causes us to strive for an ideal without necessarily putting in place the steps to get from here to there. After all, the plan of action is what really counts. Daily habits are the only part of the equation we can control and over time translate into lasting achievement.

In his book, *The Compound Effect*, Darren Hardy writes about the little seemingly insignificant actions we can easily take (or not take) on a daily basis and the profound effect that they have on our lives when compounded over time.

For instance, adding one extra workout a week, one less soda a day, reading 10 pages of a good book before bed, to name a few. At first glance those changes are subtle but in the big picture they might result in losing 5 pounds, living a little bit longer in good health or getting that illusive promotion. One of the exercises that Darren suggests in the book is to make a list of the core habits that you must strive to create daily and weekly to help you fulfill your goals.

These past couple months, knowing how important the right habits are going to be in my new lifestyle that I've deemed the "new normal," I have recreated that spreadsheet and visit it 2-3 times a day to make sure that I'm staying on course as best I can. Habits I am working on include: taking vitamins daily, drinking more water, working out 3 times a week, writing/blogging/journaling more, focusing for 3 good hours on daily business development, striving for more face to face meetings and introductions. The list is about 10-15 long for the entire week. Some I work on daily and others a couple of times a week. Regardless, I re-visit that sheet morning, noon and night. I have found that I've struggled to complete more than 75% of my total checkpoints most weeks, but then again no body ever said it was going to be easy.



*The month of March is one of my favorite times of the year. We are fortunate to live in Austin where we aren't still digging out from under piles of snow. Instead, we transition from the brown, and mild weather of winter to sunshine and the green of St. Patrick's Day. Baseball season starts to rev it's engine. Even though I don't get Spring Breaks, it's nice to know that some do. My birthday falls at the end of the month (though we've started counting backwards now). That's a full month. Enjoy it with your friends and family. If there is anything I can do for you, as always, please let me know.*

Join My  
Networks



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## 5 Simple Ways to Introduce Me to Friends & Family



Give me a Call or send me a Text message **512.773.3493**



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Please Pass Along This Copy of the **Newsletter**



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**www.BetterAustinLiving.com**



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Who's the one person you know who could most use my help? ***I sincerely thank you for your referrals!***

## Help For The Terminally Tardy

Are you always running late? Maybe you're legitimately busy, but sometimes chronic lateness springs from other factors. The danger is that being late all the time will give you a reputation for being undependable and/or careless.

Take better control of your time by considering these psychological causes for being constantly behind schedule:

**Adrenalin.** For some people, rushing to every meeting and event provides excitement. If you're enjoying the chase too much, look for other activities to fill your need for thrills. Skydiving, maybe?

**Control.** Making other people wait for you – instead of the other way around – is one way to feel you're the one in control. The problem is, important people like family, friends, customers and the boss don't like it. Remind yourself that

other people's time is important, too.

**Validation.** Being busy can be one measure of success: "Look at all my customers/projects/places to go/people to see!" But if you overextend yourself, you'll burn out. Could you consider measuring "success" by standards other than how "busy" you are?

**Anger.** Sometimes we "punish" people by forcing them to waste time waiting for us. This rarely solves any problems and may exacerbate them. If you've got an issue, talk it out openly. You'll both save a lot of time.

## High Stress = Slow Healing

A recent study at Ohio State University found that high stress levels slow healing. Students with small surface wounds needed 40 percent more time to heal during final exams compared to those with similar wounds who weren't under pressure. "This is news to keep in mind if you're heading in for elective surgery," says Dr. Phillip Marucha. "Trying to get too much done beforehand could heighten stress and thereby slow recovery."

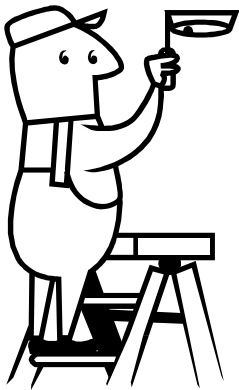
### Don't Forget

**It's Time to Change the Time:** Daylight Saving Time begins March 13 and most of us "spring forward" – that is, turn our clocks ahead one hour. You'll get that hour back on November 6, when we "fall back."



## Don't Become A Smoke Detector Statistic

Are you checking your smoke detector at least once every six months, if not more frequently? Although the average



life of a smoke detector can span as long as 10 to 15 years, the devices can go on the blink, and you wouldn't know it. About 30 percent of smoke detectors fail after 10 years, according to a recent report, and about 50 percent of them shut down after 15 years. Though your smoke detectors might emit a sound when you test them, that doesn't necessarily mean the devices are working and will alert you to smoke or fire.

And if your smoke detectors aren't battery operated or don't have a battery backup – replace them. Detectors hard-wired into your electrical system won't work during a power outage, and we all know that can happen anytime.

Taking just a few minutes to test your smoke detectors and replace the batteries will help prevent you from becoming one of these statistics: 40 percent of home fire deaths happen in homes with no smoke detectors, and another 23 percent happen in homes with detectors that don't work.

## St. Patrick's Day

**Q:** What do you call fake stone in Ireland?

**A:** A sham rock.

**Q:** What do you get if you cross poison ivy with a four-leaf clover?

**A:** A rash of good luck.

**Q:** How can you tell if an Irishman is having a good time?

**A:** He's Dublin over with laughter!

## Didya Know?

Every time you lick a stamp, you're consuming 1/10 of a calorie.

Women shoplift more often than men; the statistics are 4 to 1.

More people are killed annually by donkeys than die in air crashes.

In most American states, a wedding ring is exempt by law from inclusion among the assets in a bankruptcy estate. This means that a wedding ring cannot be seized by creditors, no matter how much the bankrupt person owes.

The average person falls asleep in seven minutes.

The vocabulary of the average person consists of 5,000 to 6,000 words.

US Presidents who never attended college: Grover Cleveland, Abraham Lincoln, Harry S Truman, and George Washington.

Only 55% of all Americans know that the sun is a star.

A human being loses an average of 40 to 100 strands of hair a day.

In playing poker, there is one chance in 500 of drawing a flush.

The dimensions of a regulation football field are: 360 feet long and 160 feet wide.

### Productivity Nugget:

Have to pick up the dry cleaning, go to the bank, stop at the store for dog food, get the car washed and grab a hair cut? Our tendency is to take care of those things on an individual basis. Instead, try **batching your tasks** together and knocking them all out in a 2-3-4 hour time period.

## Know Thy Trivia

1. Who was the first African American NFL Head Coach to win a Super Bowl?
2. How wide is a standard baseball home plate?
3. Name the only country in the world that is also a continent.
4. Name the only mammal that has the ability to fly.
5. What is the only state in the country that grows coffee?
6. Name the only U.S. President who never married?

**Answers are on the back page of this newsletter (page 8)**

## When Is "Generic" Good?

The word "generic" has something of a bad reputation; many people think of it as synonymous with bland, boring, ordinary. But at the grocery store and pharmacy, "generic" can mean saving money without giving up on quality. Here are some generic products that the consumer finance Web site WalletPop counsels shoppers to embrace:

- **Medicine.** Pharmaceutical makers are required to include the same ingredients in generic medications that are used in name brands, making them just as effective and safe – and less expensive.
- **Cereal.** Generic breakfast cereal generally runs about 25 to 50 percent less than the name brand, and it frequently has the same taste and comes in larger boxes.
- **Basic cooking staples.** Flour, salt, sugar, and other pantry items are exactly the same no matter what name is on the package, making generic flour, for example, more economical than a name brand.
- **Electronic cables.** Your brand-new big screen plasma TV doesn't really need the most expensive brand of cables on the market. Salespeople may suggest a particular manufacturer, but you'll get the same signal transfer with a generic.
- **Cosmetics.** Makeup and other beauty products aren't patented, so drugstores and manufacturers can offer duplicates at about half the price.

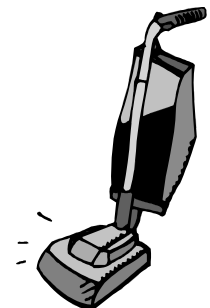
## Housework Humor

Spring begins on March 20, and around this time the thoughts of some turn to spring cleaning. But not everyone, as you'll see from these quotes:

Housework is something you do that nobody notices until you don't do it.  
– Evan Esar

Cleaning your house while your kids are still growing is like shoveling the walk before it stops snowing. – Phyllis Diller

My idea of housework is to sweep the room with a glance. – Anonymous



Always keep several get well cards on the mantle, so if unexpected guests arrive, they'll think you've been sick and unable to clean. – Maxine

I'm not going to vacuum 'til Sears makes one you can ride on. – Roseanne Barr

I hate housework. You make the beds, you wash the dishes and six months later you have to start all over again. – Joan Rivers

## What Do Your Words Say About You?

The words you use say a lot about you. A strong vocabulary doesn't depend on your ability to slip words like "obstreperous" or "conterminous" into casual conversation, but simply using language that fully expresses what you're trying to say. Here are some tips for building a good vocabulary:

**Read widely.** The best way to learn new words is to expose yourself to them as much as possible. Don't limit yourself to industry journals and popular novels. Read magazines from outside your industry and books that challenge you with their language.

**Use the dictionary.** When you run across an unfamiliar word, look it up promptly. These days you can find the meanings of unfamiliar words easily on the Internet instead of paging through that massive edition of Webster's sitting on your bookshelf.

**Practice new words.** Don't just read them silently; speak new words out loud so you're comfortable with them and can pronounce them correctly. Then look for opportunities to use them in conversation – not to draw attention to yourself, but to get into the habit of expanding your vocabulary.

**Play word games.** Take the occasional vocabulary quiz; work on crossword puzzles; play Scrabble or Boggle or any other word game you can find. You'll think about words differently and learn new ones as you go.

### See An Interesting House?

Did you recently drive by an interesting house but can't find the price? Did a sign go up down the street and you want to know what the neighbors are asking for their house? No problem, send me a quick email with the address of the property and let me do the leg work for you. I'll send you exactly what you are looking for.

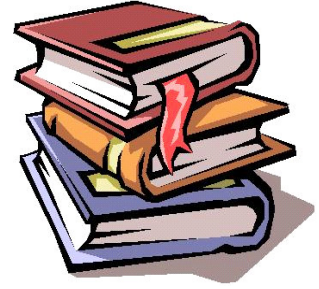
[Ryan@BetterAustinLiving.com](mailto:Ryan@BetterAustinLiving.com)

### What's My House Worth?

Do you have the itch to sell but not quite sure what you could realistically expect to sell your house for in today's market? That is a question I get quite a bit. I'd be happy to provide a Comparable Market Analysis for you. No obligation. Just give me a call or send me an email. You also should check out the great resources at:

[HomeSeller.BetterAustinLiving.com](http://HomeSeller.BetterAustinLiving.com)

# From My Nightstand



I guess maybe this month's headline should be from my laptop instead of my nightstand. I regret to say that I don't have a book to review for this month's newsletter. Already breaking format and we aren't even through 3 months of the year. I know, I know. Poor form. The reason is that I have had my hands full—literally. My reading time, I have found, is one of the things that has been sacrificed over the past month having to care for a newborn. I used to read in the mornings and I still do. But, by the time I get through with my morning prayers, devotional and some other light reading, it's time to feed or hold Madeline and its hard to read a book if you cant turn the pages. I have queued up 2 audio books on my IPOD - *The 80/20 Principle* by Richard Koch and *4 Hour Body* by Tim Ferriss but I haven't begun to listen to either. *Note:* You can get one free audio book at Audible.com with a free trial. This has been a month of adjustment and my plan is to be back on track with my book of the month very soon.

That being said, I'm not going to send you home empty handed. I do have some cool tools to share with you. As I mentioned last month, my big focuses for the first quarter of this year are priority, simplicity and effectiveness. Since it feels like the days are no longer 24 hours long, I have to find ways to be super productive in short bursts. The days of uninterrupted work during regular business hours are gone—for now.

So, here are some cool tools that I am currently using to help me do that. I've used them all and highly recommend each for the purposes that they serve. All are free except One Password (see below). If you want more info on any of these, shoot me an email.

**Wunderlist** - Wunderlist is a to-do list and task management system on steroids. But, it's so easy to use. You type in your thoughts, tasks or notes, you hit enter and boom you are done. You can create lists to organize, drag and drop from one to another and keep yourself on track. It syncs across all platforms and there is also a mobile version so you can always have access to your lists. I use this tool to both keep track of daily activities along with ideas for projects and future responsibilities. [www.6wunderkinder.com/wunderlist/](http://www.6wunderkinder.com/wunderlist/)

**Teamly** - I just started using this site and its been very helpful already. I think we can all agree that often we have trouble distinguishing and focusing on our actual priorities. Teamly allows you to track up to 5 priorities for the day, week, month and quarter. But, it only allows you to have 5 so that you avoid mental clutter. It allows you to integrate email alerts, share with colleagues, track your statistics and generate progress reports. I use this in conjunction with Wunderlist to make sure that I'm staying focused on what's important. [www.teamly.com](http://www.teamly.com)

**One Password** - Have you ever spent 10 minutes trying to figure out what your password is for a site you rarely visit? Sometimes you exhaust your allotted attempts and they make you call customer support. I hate that. Now I have One Password. The system generates one master password that securely houses all of your individual passwords and logs you in with one simple click. It will also generate passwords for you up to 20+ characters. Find One Password at: <http://agilewebsolutions.com/onepassword>

**Evernote** - I absolutely love Evernote. Their tagline is Remember everything. Capture anything, access it from anywhere and find it fast. Its basically a note taking storage facility or scrapbook. You can snip screenshots, take notes, scan pdfs directly to it, take audio notes, and they are all housed in "notebooks." It's really cool. [www.Evernote.com](http://www.Evernote.com)

## Seek The Light

As children, we were afraid of the dark. Now as adults, we are afraid of the light. We are afraid to step out. We are afraid to become more. But how can we lead others to a destination we have not reached? Keep searching, son. I am urging you to seek the light that seems so far in the distance. It will be worth the journey. You will become a lighthouse of personal growth and power, and by your example and leadership, you will prevent many a worthy man from crashing his life upon the rocks of mediocrity. – From *The Traveler's Gift* by Andy Andrews



## What To Keep In Your Safe Deposit Box

A safe deposit box at a bank is a great idea for keeping important papers and other items stored away from your home. Here are some suggestions about what should and should not go in a safe deposit box:

### In:

- Important papers, such as originals of your insurance policies; family records including birth, marriage, and death certificates; original deeds, titles, mortgages, leases, and other contracts; as well as stocks, bonds, and certificates of deposit.
- Valuables – jewels, medals, rare stamps, and other collectibles.
- Videos or pictures of your home's contents for insurance purposes.

### Out:

- Any documents or items that you might need in an emergency in case the bank is closed. Examples: powers of attorney, passports, medical care directives, and funeral directives.

While safe deposit boxes are resistant to fire, water, and other hazards, they aren't always impervious. Consider further protecting items by sealing them in zip-lock bags or plastic containers and putting your name on each item.

## And One to Grow On ...

*Each newsletter this year I'm going to leave you with a quote or an excerpt that I find both entertaining and inspirational. This month's wisdom comes from Matthew Kelly, speaker and author of one of my favorite books, *The Rhythm of Life*.*

"I am more intimately aware than ever before that we all waste life. We waste it one day at a time, a day here and a day there. We waste some days caught up in unforgiveness, and we waste other days immersed in frivolous and irresponsible activities. Life is passing us by. Life is wonderful but brief, and yet, filled with unimaginable potential. Within each of us, there is a light. When it shines, it reflects the greatness of human spirit. We live in difficult times. I pray that we never become fearful, but rather, that we turn our focus to nurturing the light within us. I hope that we allow the light within us to be nourished and to grow. Darkness has one enemy that it can never defeat - light. Let your light shine!"

## Ryan France

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### **Recycle this Newsletter**

When you are done reading your newsletter this month, do me a favor. Instead of throwing it away or putting it in a pile on your desk, please pass it along to a friend, neighbor or co-worker so that they can enjoy reading it too. That's a simple and pressure-free way to introduce me to other people.

***Thanks for Not keeping me a Secret!***

*Trivia Answers (page 4) 1. Tony Dungy-Colts 2. 17 in. 3. Australia 4. Bat 5. Hawaii 6. Buchanan*

**P.S.** Who's the next person you know who's moving out of our area? Be sure to give me a call so we can connect them with a world-class real estate and mortgage consultant.

### **Ryan France, Your Friend in the Real Estate Business StoneHaven Realty, 512-773-3493**

Here's a quick note to let you know how you and I can help anyone you feel comfortable introducing me to.

Whether the real estate market is up, down, or somewhere in between, people are still buying and selling homes. When they do, it sometimes involves relocating to another part of the country. When they relocate, they're often not sure how to connect with the best Realtor and Lender in their area.

I belong to a national organization of real estate and mortgage consultants who are committed to creating a world-class experience for people who are buying or selling a home. The next time someone mentions that a relocation is in their future, just take out your cell phone, look up my number, and call me immediately. I can connect your family member, friend or colleague with an expert Realtor and Lender in their new city, and you can feel good about helping make their move a successful one.

**Make Their Move a Success Story**



My daughter is 6 weeks old today (as I write this). Its hard to believe. But I'm not sure whether its harder to believe that she's that old or that Kristin and I have made it through 6 weeks as parents - our days filled with just about every emotion in the book.

Truthfully, it seems to have gone by in the snap of a finger, as cliché as it sounds. I wish I had a dollar or two for everyone who has told me to enjoy it because "they grow up fast, my oldest is (fill in the blank) this year." I'm starting to believe them.

Coming from the perspective of a first time parent and a novice when it came to all things child care, here are my thoughts, musings and observations from the six weeks that I have been able to share with my daughter.

- I'm convinced that the day is no longer 24 hours. Its more like 18 or so. That being said, I think that I have seen just about every one of them at least once in the past 6 weeks. I don't know that I've been able to make that claim since my college days.

- I'm quite surprised at how well I can function on 5-6 hours of sleep. Though, its not so much a lack of sleep that has taken getting used to, its the actual hours of sleep. I've gone from early bird to night owl, often not hitting the pillow until 1:30 or 2:00am.

- Hearing all of the challenging stories that other first time parents like to share, I braced for the worst. In actuality, I think I overestimated the complexity of caring for a baby. But, I grossly underestimated the amount of time and hands on attention they require.

- I learned very quickly that no matter how hard you try, you cannot encourage, cajole or force (for that matter) your baby to accommodate your schedule. You must simply relent and meet her in the midst of her world because its really the only one that matters.

- God Bless our parents for their helping eyes and hands. Madeline is extremely lucky to have doting grandparents who are eager to watch her while Kristin and I catch a break. Still, I must say that that a "night out" has been redefined as grabbing a quick bite to eat and running errands - like going to the grocery store. We finally got back to church this past Sunday since my mom volunteered to watch Madeline. As we were leaving church I remarked to Kristin that we needed to slow down and take our time walking to the car. Whereas once we hurried home to get the day started, now its nice to have the time to ourselves. And God Bless single parents. I have a new appreciation for how tough it must be to raise a child or children alone.

- Finally, there is nothing more precious than watching my daughter sleep soundly or wake up peacefully.

Its not lost on us just how blessed we are. We have a very happy, healthy and vibrant daughter who has brought a new light to our lives. Please do continue to keep up with Madeline's progress at [MadelineFrance.com](http://MadelineFrance.com). We are trying our best to keep it up to date.

