

For sale sign to virtual design: a whistle-stop tour of 30 years in property

by **Jacqui Dougray**,
estate agency manager, Stronachs LLP



SOME will remember what it was like to live in a world where information was not literally at your fingertips and advertising took place in newspapers and magazines, on bus shelters and billboards, on ITV but never the BBC.

I entered the property sector over 30 years ago with my marketing input being limited to arranging for signs to be put up outside the property, typing up a stapled brochure that had a single photograph stuck to the front, keeping the office 'shop window' up-to-date with the latest properties, meeting advert deadlines for the weekly Home section in the P&J and visiting the ASPC office to drop off property details on floppy discs.

The years rolled by and communication with clients and external agencies was now by email, leading to quicker turnaround times and heightened expectations. Everyone within in the sector was working flat out as the Aberdeen property market had a life of its own and continued to boom; we experienced years when almost anything sold, without any real need to market.

The millennium came and within no time our sector was operating in a very different way, although our remit remained meeting the basic need of 'finding a home' we had an increasing number of tools at our disposal. Publishing packages that enable in-house creation of schedules and digital photography to create more imagery at less cost being two such tools. However, without a doubt the revolution, and revelation, was the internet - this was the equivalent of one firework exploding into a hundred brilliant individual displays.

With training, we suddenly had input into production of materials, choices as to how we could distribute and promote, with options available to suit most clients. We were introduced to ways we could market our clients' properties and our own services to an audience previously out of reach; in addition to targeted digital marketing we could freely engage with LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and more.

Then came 2020 ... and yes it has been hard, very hard, and at times incredibly frustrating but it has also brought new opportunities and collaboration with sectors that pre-CV19 may have taken years to come about and be accepted

as 'the norm' in residential property.

Almost overnight, input from the creative sector has introduced affordable 360° virtual and remote viewings and we now have properties that are 'virtually furnished' - who knows what is next. The rate of change during my working life has been exponential and there is no reason to think that won't continue, after all, it's now hard to imagine there was a time you had to physically visit estate agency offices to find out if there were any properties for sale.

The recent HPI report from the UK Government showed that house prices in Aberdeen were down by 2.1% in December, not really what sellers want to hear and that is not necessarily the easiest starting point to promote an estate agency offering. However, prior to detailing the methods that are now available to gain a good sale price for their property I can also take a few moments to explain that if they are staying local, they may similarly secure their next home for less than originally planned.

Most scenarios can benefit from 'a little marketing' - be that new style or old school!

Stronachs