


Choosing a Real Estate Agent

Finding the right real estate professional requires doing a little research and asking questions. If you are new to the home buying or selling process, you should educate yourself so you know the basic steps of the transaction. An understanding of the role of an agent can help you select the right person for your situation. A person who is buying a home might look for different qualities in their agent than someone who is selling their home.

The first thing you should look for in any agent is membership in the National Association of REALTORS. Among other advantages, a REALTOR will have access to the Multiple Listing Service. If you are selling your home, you will want your home listed on the MLS. If you are buying your home, you will want to search the MLS for appropriate homes. A quick look at an agents' card for the trademark REALTOR®, or this logo  will tell you whether your agent is a REALTOR.

The second thing you should consider is the role of your agent(s). Do you need to sell your current home? Will your agent help you purchase your next home? Will you use a single agent to sell your current and purchase your next home? What if you hire an agent to sell your home, and that agent finds a buyer - Will you allow the agent to represent both you and your buyer?

You should interview several agents to see and hear the similarities and differences. If you are a home seller, you should understand that five major factors determine if a house will sell: Location, Financing, Marketing, Price, and Condition. Your agent will determine the marketing and will have influence in setting the price. Exposing your home to as many buyers and buyer's agents as possible should be a primary goal of a listing agent. These are some questions you might ask a listing agent:

1. How is the home going to be marketed?
 - a. How will the home be marketed on the Internet?
 - b. Does the agent have a home selling program?
 - c. Will the agent host open houses? How often?
2. How often should you expect communication?
3. Will the agent follow-up on showings by calling the agent and getting feedback?
4. Should the home be staged prior to showings?
5. Does the agent know the local market? What markets does the agent serve?
6. What is an appropriate listing price for your home?
7. What are the current market conditions for homes such as yours?

Rather than focus on the cost of selling your home, you should determine what is offered for that price. If you focus on the cost alone, you may find that you are not satisfied with the services offered for that price. It is easy to consider the scenario in which your home sells in a week with multiple offers. You may be lucky enough to experience one of these transactions. However, some homes can take 60, 90 or even 120 days or longer to sell, and you should consider these scenarios as well. You might

miss some of the services offered by a full service agent such as: showing your home, printing flyers, following-up with agents who show your home, placing advertisements, hosting open houses, pre-qualifying potential buyers, opening your home for the numerous inspections that are needed, and negotiating the contract terms.

If you are buying a home, you will want to choose an agent who knows the local market and has time to help you with your search. A REALTOR should listen to your desires and understand what home features are most important to you. Your agent should show you homes that meet your requirements and be available to Preview homes for you. Your agent should be able to get you local information including utilities, schools, shopping, transportation, etc. They should take as much time as you need to understand your purchase. Considerations for a buyer's agent:

1. Does your agent show you properties that are interesting and meet your stated criteria?
2. How fast are properties selling in this market?
3. Is your agent alerting you to new listings as they hit the market?
4. Does your agent give you the time you need to properly evaluate potential homes?
5. Does your agent attend the local tour (if there is a local tour)?
6. Does your agent work for one of the top listing companies in the local market?