



## What Every Home Seller Should Demand... of Their Real Estate Agent

**Read 30 minutes before  
meeting with your agent!**



*Compliments of RISMedia, the leader in real estate information systems, and your local Top 5 in Real Estate Member*

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# When Putting Your Home on the Market...

## How will you select your real estate agent?

- ▶▶ A friend?
- ▶▶ Someone you know?
- ▶▶ An agent who is very visible through their personal promotion?
- ▶▶ Their experience?
- ▶▶ An agent who sells more homes?
- ▶▶ An agent who sells homes for more?
- ▶▶ A referral?
- ▶▶ At random?
- ▶▶ Someone who provides great service (*and how would you really know?*)?
- ▶▶ Someone who possesses superior professional skills (*and how would you know which skills to look for?*)?
- ▶▶ Should you select a successful listing agent or a successful marketing agent (*and do you know the difference?*)?

If you would like to know the best way to select the right real estate agent for your particular needs—and demand the very best from that agent—then the following information is specifically designed for you. Moreover, if you are of the opinion that there really isn't much difference between real estate agents...then prepare to become enlightened. Not only is there a difference, the difference is quite substantial!

### AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR HOME SELLERS ABOUT RISMedia's TOP 5 IN REAL ESTATE NETWORK®

The Top 5 in Real Estate Network® was developed by RISMedia, the leader in real estate information systems, and is comprised of leading real estate agents from throughout the United States and Canada. Members represent a variety of highly respected international, national, regional and local real estate firms. Top 5 membership is based upon real estate professionals meeting a stringent series of requirements, including experience and results.

Please contact the Top 5 member who presented you with this brochure for any and all of your real estate needs.

*Note: Please disregard this information if your home is presently listed with a licensed real estate agent.*



# The Don'ts and Do's of Selecting Your Real Estate Agent

## Don'ts

## Do's

### Don't Select a Listing Agent

Don't settle for a "so-called" listing agent. So-called "listing agents" are noted for dedicating more effort toward securing listings than they do toward effectively marketing the property itself.

### Do Select a Marketing Agent

Demand that your agent is fully committed to being your marketing agent—dedicated to not just getting your home to sell but to causing your home to sell for *more*. Marketing agents leverage the laws of supply and demand. Your marketing agent will create the optimum competition for your home. Marketing agents encourage all other agents to sell your home.

### Don't Select an Arbitrator

Don't settle for an agent who, at all costs, wants to see both sides of the transaction equally satisfied, even when they are representing just one party!

### Do Select an Effective Real Estate Negotiator

If your marketing agent has a fiduciary responsibility only to you, demand that their full negotiating efforts are focused on your benefit. Your agent should leave the interests of the other party in the transaction to the agent representing them. The agent representing you, however, becomes more valuable to you through the effective way in which they engage the other party to the transaction on your behalf.

### Don't Select a Personal Promotion Specialist

Many agents, in order to increase their prominence within the marketplace and additional brokerage opportunities, actually spend more money on promoting themselves than they do promoting the properties they represent.

### Do Select a Property Promotion Specialist

Demand an agent who is committed to robust off- and online marketing of the properties they represent. Insist upon not only a comprehensive marketing plan, but one that is customized for your property's distinctive characteristics. And remember—no two homes are exactly alike, so demand a tailored marketing approach for your home.

### Don't Select One Who Sells More Homes

Don't settle for an agent whose greatest claim to fame is that they "sell more homes" than their competition. Selling more homes, often-times, does not equate to selling—or more importantly—marketing homes for more.

### Do Select One Who Sells Homes for More

Do demand that your prospective agent can not only point to a significant number of homes that they have successfully marketed/sold, but also how, when representing home sellers, they are focused on home selling for *more*.

### Don't Select Service Only

That's right—this is not a misprint! Too many real estate agents proclaim that their greatest value is the outstanding service they provide. Service should be the frosting on the cake, not the cake itself! While great service is extremely important (and something you should demand), too often when referenced, it lacks specificity and, therefore, makes it difficult for homeowners to comprehend precisely what it is they are paying for.

### Do Select Great Service and Great Skill

Although you want your doctor, lawyer or pilot to provide great service, their professional skills are of far greater value. Carry these same skill-based expectations over when you are selecting your real estate agent. Do demand high-level real estate skills.

**In the next section, we will explain which skills to look for** →

## DEMAND A REAL ESTATE MARKETING AGENT

Insist that your agent is fully committed

To ensure that you are selecting a **marketing** agent and not a mere listing agent, we suggest that when you interview a real estate agent about their marketing skills, that you ask the following questions:

1. How is a real estate marketing agent different from a real estate sales agent?
2. How is marketing different from advertising?
3. How is marketing different from real estate personal promotion?
4. Please explain your philosophy regarding marketing.
5. How do you market off- as well as online?
6. How do you market to other real estate agents?
7. How do you market to niche or segmented consumers?
8. How do you market to relocation and referral buyers?
9. How will you develop a comprehensive and customized marketing plan for my home?
10. **Please tell us, from a marketing standpoint, anything else that you will do to get our home sold at the highest price and with the best terms.**



## DEMAND REAL ESTATE MERCHANDISING

While it's a cliché, it is certainly true: your home has only one chance to make a first impression.

Merchandising, oftentimes, is referred to as property preparation or staging. If all that an agent you are considering can do is offer obvious tips like, “empty the closets, clean the home, de-clutter, paint the front door, cut the grass, eliminate odors, remove personal items and cook vanilla in the microwave to create a baking aroma,” then it's all the more important that you are prepared to ask them the following questions:

- ▶ What are the things we can do, at no additional expense, to add greater value to our home?
- ▶ What investments in merchandising could we make that would generate a significantly greater return?
- ▶ What would be involved and how long would it take?
- ▶ Are we in a marketplace that—because of the supply-and-demand ratios, how the market is trending and the number of days on the market—lends itself to merchandising our home?

And to further ensure that the agent you are considering has the skills to implement any suggestions, ask these additional questions:

1. Please explain the difference between marketing and merchandising. (And if they say they're the same thing, that's a tip-off.)
2. What merchandising or staging can be done to add to the value of our home? (This question will also allow you to identify some of the agent's deeper feelings about your property.)

3. Ask for examples of other properties they have helped merchandise, what they specifically recommended and how it influenced the results.
4. Ask what concerns prospective buyers might have about your property. Ask if there is anything that can be done to address these concerns through effective merchandising.

Note: The Top 5 in Real Estate member who provided you with this valuable information is prepared to assist you in any home staging or home improvement effort as part of their commitment to real estate merchandising.

## DEMAND REAL ESTATE NETWORKING

To the casual observer, marketing and networking might appear to serve the same purpose, but for sophisticated, top-producing agents, these are two very distinct skills.

For example, your agent may excel at real estate marketing and merchandising, but the results you seek might still be jeopardized if they lack the proper networking skills. *Networking is vital in real estate because in many—if not most—cases, a successful real estate transaction requires the involvement of other members of the real estate community or network, if you will.*

Here are some important real estate networking-related questions to ask when interviewing a potential agent:

1. How important is networking within the real estate marketplace?
2. What is your plan regarding networking for the sale of our home?
3. What are your most effective methods of networking with and exciting out-of-area agents who may ordinarily overlook our town and our home?
4. Tell me about your various referral networks.
5. What will you do to get other agents to preview our property?
6. How do you network with other agents beyond the MLS and the Internet regarding our home?
7. How do you follow up with other agents?
8. **And the most important question: How will your networking skills help sell our home for more?**

## DEMAND REAL ESTATE NEGOTIATING

Many home sellers have observed first-hand how their agent did an excellent job of marketing, merchandising and networking, but failed miserably when it came to negotiating. Do not assume that all real estate agents possess this vital skill—in fact, some believe it's more likely that more don't, than do.



*If You Really Want to Know... By way of role-playing, ask the agent whom you are considering to "sell" your property back to you...as if you were the buyer. This exercise will provide you an opportunity to evaluate how convincing or skillful your prospective agent will be during negotiations.*

Negotiating experts assert that there are five negotiation styles:

**Accommodators:** Those who seek to preserve personal relationships

**Avoiders:** Those who avoid conflict

**Collaborators:** Those who involve both parties fully

**Compromisers:** Those whose greatest desire is just to close the deal

**Competitors:** Those whose greatest desire is to outright win

Given the complexity of real estate negotiations, no one style fully characterizes any one agent. These five styles can, however, be very useful for the purpose of discussing negotiating with your prospective agent. Make sure you pick a negotiator—not an arbitrator.

Here are some questions that will assist you in determining your prospective real estate agent's commitment to effective negotiating:

- ▶ As a home seller, how should we conduct ourselves when meeting buyers and buyer agents?
- ▶ How should we most effectively respond to a low offer?
- ▶ What is the list-to-sales price ratio in our marketplace and how will this influence the way you will negotiate for us?
- ▶ How long are the homes in this price range taking to sell and how will this influence negotiations?
- ▶ Does having an open house help or hurt our negotiating position?
- ▶ Does having a "For Sale" sign help or hurt our negotiating position?
- ▶ As my agent, how will you respond if somebody asks you, "Where are they moving?" or "Why are they selling?"
- ▶ Please give us an example(s) of how your negotiating strategies and skills brought a significantly better price to a property you represented.
- ▶ Which features of our home will help you negotiate the best outcome for us?

## DEMAND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

The Top 5 in Real Estate Network® advises all home sellers to become fully satisfied with an agent's Internet and information-related technological skills before signing a marketing or listing agreement. Information technology skills are extremely important as most buyers, due to the Internet, are now seeking a far greater level of information and transparency than ever before. Internet-savvy agents are aware that the vast percentage of buyers begin their home search online. These agents are, therefore, proficient at creating online marketing strategies for the properties they bring to the Internet.



The unprecedented access that consumers now enjoy regarding property-for-sale information, as well as relevant information regarding schools, services, transportation, etc., all make for a better-educated and empowered consumer. Real estate agents who are both Internet savvy and proficient in utilizing the Internet as a unique marketing resource provide their clients with an unprecedented competitive reach over those properties represented by less Internet-inclined real estate agents. Here are some questions that will help you determine your

prospective agent's IT skills and how they relate to optimum exposure for your home:

- ▶ On which websites will you market our property?
- ▶ How many photos will you include?
- ▶ How will you create a photo marketing strategy? What types of pictures will you take of our property, and in which order will they be displayed?
- ▶ How many photos do you recommend?
- ▶ Are there any particular rooms, or the property itself, that should be featured in more than one picture?
- ▶ What type of community, neighborhood, services, schools, transportation and other contextually important information regarding my home's lifestyle will be included?
- ▶ How do you provide my property with greater shelf positioning online?
- ▶ Will you provide virtual tours or videos of my property?
- ▶ How do you or how does your company generate consumer traffic to visit my property online?

## DEMAND PROPER PRICING

**P**roper pricing is paramount when it comes to successfully marketing and selling your home. As previously mentioned, due to buyer access to information, never before have home sellers and real estate agents had to be as prepared to promote and defend the value of a property. Your agent will need, in most cases, to provide buyers and buyer agents with a proper pricing rationale regarding your for-sale property. Specifically, the Internet has substantially elevated the consumer's ability to access present and historical data regarding properties for sale.

Fifteen years ago, only a small percentage of buyers would ask for the above-mentioned market metrics. This has all changed. Today's more-informed buyers will generally insist on being provided with:

- ▶ The list-to-sales price ratios in the marketplace
- ▶ The appraised value and/or the assessed value
- ▶ The number of days a property is on the market
- ▶ What the home seller purchased the property for
- ▶ How long ago the property was purchased
- ▶ If there have been price reductions since it was listed
- ▶ What renovations or additions have been made to the home...and much more



If the agent representing you does not possess the ability or skills necessary to provide accurate data to both buyers and buyer agents to counterbalance some of the challenges regarding your property's asking price, this might act to your detriment.

**Accordingly, both RISMedia, the leader in real estate information systems, and its Top 5 in Real Estate Network® members strongly encourage you to consider only those real estate agents who will meet your needs by developing the proper pricing strategy for your property.** Moreover, they should be able to explain and even extol your property's value based upon their ability to provide and interpret related and relevant real estate information.

**Top 5 believes you are now better prepared than 95% of home sellers. Feel free to contact your local Top 5 in Real Estate member for all your real estate needs.**



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