

Essential Questions Every Home Seller Should Ask Before Selecting a Real Estate Agent

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Buying or selling a home is usually the largest, most complicated financial transaction any of us will ever make, so selecting the right real estate professional to assist you is critical. Not all real estate agents are the same and in a very competitive industry with so many choices available to consumers. How do you find the best agent for you?

A good place to start is by interviewing a number of real estate professionals, much as you would interview potential employees for a job opening, before making your final decision. By opening up a good dialogue, you can begin to determine what specific services the agent will provide for their fees, their professional knowledge and expertise and whether there is a good rapport between the two of you.

There are a number of variables in selecting the right agent to sell your home. The resources and stability of the company, a sales associate's experience and market knowledge, his or her success rate and professionalism will all have a significant impact on the decision-making process.

There are several critical elements in selling your home; receiving the highest price with acceptable terms and managing your legal risk. You want to determine that your real estate agent has strategies for these in place when representing you.

The following are some questions I'd recommend you ask any real estate professional before hiring them to sell your home.

What exactly will you do to expose my house to the most buyers? With the choice between a full-service brokerage and a limited-service one, consumers need to understand there is a difference. The old saying goes, you get what you pay for. Ask the sales associate for a specific marketing plan which should include an action plan calendar, direct mail program, open houses, broker networking, local media and internet exposure. The majority of

buyers in Lamorinda in today's market come from out of the area. What will the agent do to reach those buyers and what will they expect you to do? Beware of agents who think it is a good idea to keep your listing "in-house". Remember, generally the more people who see your home the higher the price you will receive

How exactly will the agent help you prepare your home for sale? It is very important to do some preparation before putting your home on the market for buyers to see. A good agent will take you through the process; they can recommend reliable and reputable resources for repairs, inspections and staging. Taking the time to repair those deferred maintenance items, freshen up your home and showcase it to its best advantage can bring you a higher price in less time.

How does the agent and their company assist in minimizing the Sellers' risk when selling their home? We all know that California is a consumer protection state. This is an important but frequently overlooked question. Sellers need to be sure when they close the sale of their home that they are in compliance with all local, state and federal requirements. An experienced, well informed agent should be confident in answering this question. They should have your protection "top of mind". It is important to ask your agent what steps they plan to take to make sure you are in compliance. A good agent will take the time to go through the many disclosures and statutory obligations that government agencies require. A note of caution, every year these requirements change so be sure that the company you choose has a good legal department with up to date information.

What systems do you use to determine price? Pricing is the critical element in any real estate sale. A good agent will use many different criteria for pricing including comparable sales in the surrounding geographical area, square footage, and amenities of the home. Ask for sound recent data.

Finally remember this person and their firm will be representing you and your home to buyers and agents. Is this agent professional in their appearance and confident in his/her manner? Is he/she an effective and articulate communicator? What is the quality of their marketing tools and web presence? Ask for and follow up with the agent's reference. Trust your gut, you must feel comfortable with this person because you are entrusting them with one of your most precious assets ... your home.



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