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

Valerie Cook-Watkins



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 de-

ferred 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.

Lamorinda Home Sales continued



LAFAYETTE	Last reported: 18
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$606,500
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,950,000
MORAGA	Last reported: 7
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$407,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$1,040,000
ORINDA	Last reported: 9
LOWEST AMOUNT:	\$335,000
HIGHEST AMOUNT:	\$2,400,000

Home sales are compiled by CalREsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither CalREsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

- 17 Beaumont Court, \$875,000, 3 Bdrms, 1561 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 5-18-07
- 3333 Beechwood Drive, \$745,000, 3 Bdrms, 1474 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 5-11-07
- 60 Carolyn Court, \$725,000, 3 Bdrms, 927 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 5-15-07
- 3396 East Terrace, \$986,000, 3 Bdrms, 1301 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 5-23-07
- 1194 Glen Road, \$1,200,000, 3 Bdrms, 1809 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 5-17-07
- 695 Glenside Drive, \$815,000, 2 Bdrms, 1814 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 5-11-07
- 3767 Happy Valley Road, \$1,360,000, 4 Bdrms, 2973 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 5-23-07
- 4058 Happy Valley Road, \$1,950,000, 4 Bdrms, 2185 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 5-23-07
- 3951 Los Arabis Drive, \$835,000, 4 Bdrms, 1737 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 5-21-07
- 1107 Magnolia Lane, \$975,000, 3 Bdrms, 1652 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 5-9-07
- 2 Middle Road, \$1,150,000, 3 Bdrms, 2340 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 5-15-07
- 820 Mountain View Drive, \$1,015,000, 4 Bdrms, 1885 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 5-17-07
- 3279 Mt. Diablo Court #12, \$710,000, 3 Bdrms, 1752 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 5-22-07
- 3279 Mt. Diablo Court #8, \$606,500, 3 Bdrms, 1731 SqFt, 1986 YrBlt, 5-23-07
- 1901 Reliez Valley Road, \$1,385,000, 4 Bdrms, 4005 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 5-9-07
- 1224 Upper Happy Valley Road, \$1,040,000, 3 Bdrms, 1635 SqFt, 1936 YrBlt, 5-22-07
- 1054 Vista Bella, \$1,550,000, 4 Bdrms, 3542 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 5-14-07
- 7 West Creek Court, \$697,000, 3 Bdrms, 1448 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 5-17-07

MORAGA

- 744 Augusta Drive, \$805,000, 2 Bdrms, 2079 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 5-18-07
- 1380 Camino Peral, \$533,000, 2 Bdrms, 1126 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 5-10-07
- 1476 Camino Peral #A, \$407,000, 1 Bdrms, 951 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 5-22-07
- 89 David Drive, \$1,040,000, 4 Bdrms, 2544 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 5-11-07
- 20 Dickenson Drive, \$867,000, 4 Bdrms, 1977 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 5-22-07
- 39 Lenelle Court, \$1,005,000, 4 Bdrms, 1710 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 5-18-07
- 401 Woodminster Drive, \$580,000, 2 Bdrms, 1474 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 5-9-07

ORINDA

- 120 Camino Sobrante, \$2,100,000, 3 Bdrms, 3197 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 5-15-07
- 66 La Campana Road, \$1,961,000, 4 Bdrms, 3391 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 5-18-07
- 40 Lucille Way, \$335,000, 5-9-07
- 292 Moraga Way, \$1,275,000, 5 Bdrms, 2923 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 5-22-07
- 124 Orchard Road, \$1,100,000, 4 Bdrms, 2333 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 5-16-07
- 4 Southwood Court, \$860,000, 3 Bdrms, 1573 SqFt, 1938 YrBlt, 5-10-07
- 69 Southwood Drive, \$1,485,000, 3 Bdrms, 2926 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 5-16-07
- 17 Tappan Lane, \$2,400,000, 6 Bdrms, 3503 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 5-23-07
- 53 Van Ripper Lane, \$1,675,000, 4 Bdrms, 2292 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 5-22-07

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