



The right professional

What you need to know when choosing the right agent

Who does the agent work for?

First and foremost, real estate agents have an obligation to work in the best interest of their clients. This is important to remember when sharing confidential information such as how much money you're offering for a home, versus what you'd actually be willing to pay. If the agent is working with the seller, he or she may feel obligated to share this information with their client, effectively nullifying your strategy.

Before beginning your search, find an agent that will work for you — the buyer. This will ensure that they are trying to get the best deal for you, not the seller.

Interview several agents

A common mistake buyers make is to accept working with the first agent that greets them at an agency, or immediately using an agent recommended by someone else.

When meeting with an agent, think of it as an interview. Come prepared with questions you have about the buying process or about how they would handle potential situations.

Ask the agent if real estate is their full-time job and how long they've been in the industry. How many clients do they work with at once, and what is their average time for completing a sale? How accessible will they be to you, and how much of the transaction will they be involved with?

If you're not comfortable with the agent's answers, personality or communication style, thank them for their time and continue your search. If the first agent you meet seems like a good fit, let them know that you're interested in working with them, but you'd like to talk to a few other people first. Make a point to interview at least three agents, making sure you've found the best person to work with.

The home buying process takes time, and it's a big commitment. Regardless of how knowledgeable an agent may be about the industry or a particular market, problems can arise if you can't establish a comfortable, trusting partnership from the beginning.

Can the agent identify with you?

Choose an agent who can think like a buyer. Having someone on your side that understands your individual situation and goals will go a long way toward getting the best deal possible.

MARKETING YOUR HOME

Social media

If you are active on Facebook or Twitter, you likely have 100 or so connections through social media. Use them. Even if they are not in the market for buying a home, network with your friends and followers. They may know someone who is. Post a link to your home's online profile page and add a few lines about your home.

Do market research

Take a look around your neighborhood. Are there three homes similar to yours for sale? Five? 10? So how can you make your home stand out? The answer could be all in the price. Conduct a little market research online and check to see what other homes in your neck of the woods are listed at. You can also ask your real-estate agent for a comparative analysis of similar listings. This will help you determine the most aggressive price point for your home.