



Find

FINDING THE BEST AGENT MEANS FINDING THE BEST FIT FOR YOU



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Q: How do I find the best real estate agent? And, how do I choose which real estate agent to use?

I'm learning a lot going through the process of "properly" selling my house. I interviewed five real estate agents the Saturday before last, and I was amazed by the range of differences in their attitudes and approaches to selling real estate.

The real estate agent I selected seems to be the most aggressive in terms of her advice for preparing the house, marketing the house and just generally wanting the listing. She sent a staging expert to my house who suggested I replace all the door hardware, replace all seven ceiling fans, remove all the window screens and replace the countertops in the kitchen. This kind of work is going to cost a bunch of money.

Is it smart to follow the advice of this real estate agent or just offer money back with the house to let the new owner pick those things?

A: Let's start with your real question: How do you find the best real estate agent? And, it isn't just about finding the best real estate agent in town, it's finding the best fit for you.

Whenever we talk to home sellers, we advise them to interview at least three or four different real estate agents because, as you've noted, each will have an entirely different approach to the process of selling a home. (You've gone beyond that and interviewed five different people, but still found that they all had different approaches and thoughts about your home.)

Real estate agents, like people, are motivated by different things. Some will say or do anything to get your listing, even going as far as to promise you a "pie in the sky" price that they predict you'll collect at the closing table. Some try to be honest about where the local marketplace is, hoping that you'll find their honest approach appealing. Some will take a data-driven approach and show you what else is selling in the neighborhood,

and then break that down into price/amenity and compare your home with other comps.

What type of real estate agent should you want? The best real estate agent will match your temperament. So if, for example, you're a laid-back sort of soul, you probably don't want someone cracking the whip and making you feel like a failure if you have a piece of lint on the floor. If you don't smoke, you shouldn't hire a smoker. If you are detail oriented, don't hire a real estate agent who is disorganized.

In general, when you are looking to hire a real estate agent, you'll want to invite a handful into your home to do a comparative marketing analysis (CMA). The CMA will dig into other homes that are similar to yours that are currently on the market as well as those that have sold in the last six months. These are normally referred to as "comps." The best real estate agent will have analyzed all of the comps, compared your home to those, developed a sophisticated marketing plan for getting your home sold (and

maximizing buyer interest), and provided a suggested list price.

Now let's turn to your situation: The agent you hired is, by your definition, "aggressive." She clearly thinks that to sell your home would benefit from a few improvements. The question you need to ask is, "How much money will I get from the house if I don't make these improvements vs. if I do make them?" If you estimate that the cost of making these changes is \$10,000, and the agent thinks you'll be able to up your sales price by \$25,000, and sell your home in an instant, then we think you should make the changes as quickly as possible. On the other hand, if the cost of the changes she wants is \$10,000 but she doesn't think you'll get a dime out of it, nor does she think it will sell that much faster, then it's a tougher call.

The best real estate agent for you is the one who is going to help you understand, in as kind a way as possible, what you have to do in order to get your home sold as fast as possible, for the most money possible.