

Regarding Online Reviews, One Just Has to Take the Bad With the Good

Nowadays online reviews are the rage. Many real estate websites carry reviews, some of them under the control of the agent, others not. Zillow, for example, provides a link for agents to send to clients allowing them to write a review, and it's expected and accepted that the agent would only send that link to clients who would write positive reviews. That's why you're unlikely to read a negative review on Zillow, and it is also possible, I have observed, for agents to fabricate reviews. (I saw 10 glowing reviews for a newer agent who had fewer than five transactions on the MLS.)

REAL ESTATE TODAY



By **JIM SMITH, Realtor®**

Not wanting to leave the rating of agents to non-Realtor websites, the National Association of Realtors (NAR) has taken more than one stab at creating an honest solution which its members would accept. Since the "80/20 rule" applies here as elsewhere, however, NAR members keep beating down any proposal which would make it easier for consumers to identify the 20% of Realtors who do 80% of the transactions.

One of those "stabs" was to work with Quality Service Certification, Inc. (QSC), which operates www.RatedAgent.com. NAR called it the "Realtor Excellence Program." Golden Real Estate was an early adopter, and if you visit that website, you'll see ratings for me and other agents which are based on

Update on Bella Bluegrass

Regular readers of this column will recall a late May column I wrote about replacing my Kentucky bluegrass last fall with Bella bluegrass, a new strain which looks like Kentucky bluegrass but doesn't grow as fast or tall and doesn't require as much watering.

My first mowing was on June 1, but it didn't create any visible grass clippings because I was merely evening out the 4-6" tall grass. As I write this, it is July 6, and my lawn is ready for a second mowing, but again only to even out the remarkably short grass.

It turns out that the grass requires more water than I had claimed in May. Once the spring rains stopped falling, I found by mid-June that I did need to dewinterize my sprinkler system, and I have, in fact, run the sprinkler system four times for 20 minutes in each zone. This is, however, much less water than is required to keep Kentucky bluegrass looking green and healthy.

responses by actual clients to QSC surveys sent out shortly after each closing. Agents cannot manipulate the responses in any way. We can't even submit a response to a negative review. With a maximum rating of 5.0, none of us has a perfect rating. That's a good indicator of the site's integrity.

Because I know and trust the methodology of that website, I felt confident relying on it when I was asked by a friend to refer an agent in Kansas City for selling one house and buying another. After those transactions were completed, my confidence in the website was affirmed by the praise which my friend lavished on the agent I had recommended. Personally, I wish NAR had made permanent its short-lived Realtor Excellence Program with QSC and that more real estate brokerages had signed on to it. Now that NAR's experiment has ended, our company pays QSC for continued survey service.

New to this business of rating Realtors is www.Yelp.com. I was inspired to create a business page on Yelp and even paid for premium positioning on it. If you search Yelp for a real estate company in

Golden, you'll see Golden Real Estate featured prominently with pictures, a 90-second video, and an extended description of our company.

What you'll also start to see over time are customer reviews. Businesses may not plant reviews on Yelp or solicit reviews from former clients — and they can't prevent negative reviews from being displayed. You can imagine my surprise, then, when our company's very first review was an extremely negative one from a former client with whom I terminated a short, unpleasant relationship. In the review you'll read that I'm "unprofessional" and that I shouted and cursed at this "senior citizen and widow." Her complaint is based on fact, but is greatly overblown, without disclosing what led to my one sentence she described as "cursing." She also doesn't mention that I apologized after our blow-up.

Yelp does allow a business owner to submit a response to a negative review, and I have taken advantage of that process. Hopefully future reviews will raise my average Yelp rating from its initial 1.0 and reveal that first review to be the anomaly it is.

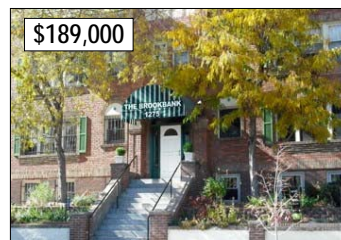
This Week's Featured New Listings

Two New Central Denver Listings by Chuck Brown

If you're looking to live in Denver's historic Baker neighborhood, this 1903 half-duplex at 229 Cherokee St. (top picture) may be the one. The nicely laid out floor plan features 2 bedrooms, 1 bathroom, a dining room, a full kitchen and a partial basement with extra storage and a laundry area. Lots of newer updates including a high efficiency furnace, water heater, newer double hung windows, and a roof replacement in 2009. There is a small backyard with enough room for a patio and a small dog. Just a short walk to the shops and night life on Broadway. **Open Saturday, 1-4 p.m.**



This 746-sq.-ft., 1-bedroom, 1-bath, garden level condo at 1275 Clarkson St. in Denver's Capitol Hill neighborhood is a great opportunity to buy an affordable property in the heart of Central Denver. It's a short walk to Whole Foods, Downtown Denver, and all that Colfax Ave. has to offer. Inside you'll find many newer updates such as quartz countertops, fresh paint and double pane windows. Off-street parking is limited but



spaces are available on a rotating basis and two are available annually to the highest bidder. **Open Saturday, 1-4pm.** Video tours of both listings can be viewed at www.CentralDenverHomes.info.



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