

What's a Virtual Tour, And How Do Virtual Tours Differ?

By **JIM SMITH, Realtor®**

It's common knowledge that more pictures help to sell a house faster. An industry source whom I interviewed for this week's column told me that homes with extra photos take, on average, one-third as long to sell — an important consideration.



Virtual tours are, simply, an online technology for giving the buyer more pictures to look at, including panoramic pictures and even 360-degree pictures.

Like all successful agents, I offer virtual tours with all my listings. Such tours are so affordable now, there's no excuse for not using them to market a house. Yet, my own quick analysis of local realtor.com listings showed that only 23% of the listed properties had links for virtual tours. On realtor.com, if you click the "Featured Tour" button, the listings with virtual tours are displayed first, which is a big advantage when your house is competing with many other properties.

There are several different vendors creating and hosting virtual tours. The dominant vendor is Obeo, formerly known as 360House.com (which is still its URL). Another service, which is owned by realtor.com, is HomeTour360. Another popular company is TourFactory.com. My

preferred vendor is VisualTour.com.

Each company has a different approach. Initially, virtual tour companies focused on 360-degree panoramic pictures. HomeTour360 still offers only that kind of picture, which may account for their poor market share. Obeo offers a combination of 360's, wide-angle panoramas and still photos, which is the main reason they stopped using the tradename 360House.com. I signed up with VisualTour.com specifically because they seamlessly blend still and panoramic photos. Another reason was that I can shoot all the photos myself, create the panoramic shots, and have a virtual tour online within hours instead of days. With other companies, you have to schedule the photographer and wait up to 3 days to get the tour online — and pay more.

With VisualTour, I can use my virtual tour capability creatively, such as to promote Habitat for Humanity's new Home Improvement Outlet and to promote a client's moving sale. I also used it for my honeymoon pictures! With VisualTour I have this flexibility because the vendor charges a flat monthly subscription fee no matter how many tours I create — and I shoot all the pictures myself.

If you're comparing listing agents, I suggest you look at the virtual tours for each agent's current listings to see which tour is more effective.

This Week's Featured Listing

1890 Queen Anne Victorian in Highlands

Within Denver's Highlands neighborhood is the Witter Cofield Historic District. This listing is not only in the center of that district, it is featured on the cover of *Side by Side*, a book published by and about that district! While retaining its full historic charm, this home is beautifully updated. Its spacious kitchen features granite counters and stainless appliances, and all three bedrooms have their own full bathrooms. Just listed at **\$425,000**.



Tour this home online at:
www.HighlandsVictorian.com



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