

Here Are Some Questions Sellers Should Ask When Hiring a Listing Agent

Do you know what to look for in a listing agent, and the questions to ask during a listing presentation?

You'll probably want to know their level of experience, competence and success in selling similar properties, hopefully within your city or neighborhood.

Like you, I monitor the real estate activity where I live, and I'm astonished how many homes are listed by agents I've never heard of. As I write this on Monday, there are 50 active or pending listings in my area, represented by 40 different agents! No agent has more than three listings. And despite practicing real estate here for 17 years, I only recognize the names of 11 of them.

This is typical of every city. Where did the sellers find all those different agents to list their homes? Many, I suspect are friends and family — every agent's biggest "competitor." In some cases, the seller had just bought their replacement home elsewhere and was convinced by that listing agent to list their current home — not the best decision if that agent is unfamiliar with your neighborhood, lives far away, and is unable to show the home on short notice, answer questions from buyers, or keep your brochure box well stocked.

Or perhaps the agent sent a letter or taped a note to your door claiming to have a buyer for your home. That earned him or her an interview, in which the agent said that his buyer found another home but convinced you to list with them.

Let's say, however, that you want to *interview* listing agents and make a rational hiring decision.

First, choose the agents to interview based on their location and experience in your neighborhood or city. Second, study their active/sold listings to see (1) their geographic distribution and (2) how well they are presented on the MLS.

For this you can use a shortcut I created, FindDenverRealtors.com, which takes you to the page on Denver's MLS for searching agents by name. In my case, you'd see a profile and my active, pending and sold listings. Search for the agent(s) you're considering. Read their profile, if they created one. Look at their current and sold listings. Click on one or more of them to see how they described the home on the MLS. Did they list all the rooms, not just bedrooms and bathrooms, providing dimensions and descriptions, or just enter the mandatory fields? **Keep in mind that, the best indicator of how they will serve you is how they have served previous sellers.**

Looking at those listings will answer the most important questions which you'd ask in person, but you won't have to take their word — the truth is there in front of you. You'll learn, for example, whether they did point-and-shoot pictures or had a professional photographer shoot HDR (magazine quality) photos, and whether they created a narrated video tour or just a slide show with music.

Having chosen who to interview that way, ask these questions of those you invite into your home for an interview:

What commission percentage do you charge? Keep in mind, there is no standard commission. It's totally negotiable, and the industry average is in the mid-5's, not 6%.

See whether the agent volunteers that they reduce their commission when they don't have to pay 2.8% to a buyer's agent. If you have to ask them, consider it a red flag. They hoped you wouldn't.

Ask the agent whether he or she will discount their commission if you hire them to represent you in the purchase of your replacement home.

Hopefully the candidate will have researched the market and make a sound recommendation of

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listing price. Beware of agents who inflate their suggested listing price so you will list with them.

When setting the appointment, ask the agent to bring a spreadsheet of their sold listings with dates, days on market, listing price and sold price.

Lastly, how will they promote your listing? Measure their promises against what we do, published at www.HowWeMarketListings.info.

Price Reduced on Foothills Home

Two weeks ago we featured a 4-BR home with mountain views and a finished walkout basement at **494 Mt. Vernon Circle**. It was a great deal at \$825,000, but the price was just reduced to **\$798,000**. Take a narrated video tour at ParadiseHillsHome.info, then call Chuck Brown at **303-885-7855** to see it.

Climate Change, Our Planet's Most Pressing Issue

Colorado has been blessed with probably the least impact of climate change, but eventually it will catch up with us. Meanwhile, we watch, stunned, not only by the tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires and flooding in other sections of the country, but also by the failure of the major networks to mention climate change as the culprit and to point out that it will only get worse over time.

Over 5 years ago, in 2014, the headline on my column was **"We May Have Already Passed the Tipping Point on Climate Change."** Here is what I wrote back then:

Each January, political leaders shower us with speeches on the State of the Union, the State, the City and other jurisdictions. No one presents a State of the Planet speech, but if someone did, I suspect climate change would be topic #1 — and for good reason.

My friend and mentor, Steve Stevens, sent me a chart showing the decline in late summer Arctic sea ice. It's a wake-up call regarding climate change. It's posted at www.GoldenREblog.com.

I don't have a degree in science, but I do understand science enough to know this chart's significance.

If you studied any science — or own an automobile — you know that white surfaces reflect solar heat, whereas dark surfaces (open ocean, for example) absorb it. The loss of sea ice does not just indicate global warming, it accelerates it, which makes one worry whether it's already

too late to reverse the effects of human-caused global warming.

Climate change deniers may celebrate the fact that the Arctic Ocean is becoming increasingly navigable in the summer, but they need to connect the dots between global warming and the whipsawing we now see in our day-to-day weather.

I'd be curious to see the statistics on how many times the network news programs featured severe weather reports in 2013 versus previous years. I can't remember an evening in which weather wasn't a major or lead story.

Our earth's climate has been de-stabilized. Had you heard of the polar vortex before this year? I hadn't. The uninformed will say that our cold weather proves that the earth is not warming, but how naïve is that? It's global warming that is causing extremes, both of temperature and precipitation — which is caused by warming. I don't hear them questioning El Nino, in which natural changes in ocean temperature affect climate.

Is there time to reverse this situation? Maybe not. But we certainly don't have time to debate its existence with climate change deniers.

[End of my 2014 column]

Night after night, we see news reports of unprecedented severe weather around the country, but rarely is the connection to climate change mentioned. Our president's failure to address climate change may be part of his legacy.

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