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The Job of a Listing Agent Is Not to Sell Your Home, But to Get It Sold

There's a popular misconception that the job of a listing agent is to sell your home. I beg to differ.

The real job of a listing agent — prior to negotiating a contract and representing you through the transaction — is to maximize exposure of your home to buyers and to the agents who represent buyers. Understand this, and you will find it much easier to select the right listing agent, because it's far easier to compare the marketing skills and practices of different listing agents than it is to compare their selling abilities.

First, recognize that fewer than 10% of listings are sold by the agents who listed them. That's why we have an MLS. Next, don't mistake simply putting the home on the MLS (which is all many agents do) with true marketing.

True marketing to other agents as well as direct buyers begins, **but must not end**, with full data entry on the MLS, beyond those

few fields that the MLS requires. It means, for example, putting in room dimensions and locations and using the full public remarks field to describe the home's selling points. It means uploading ten high-quality pictures, not just one exterior picture. And it means producing a "virtual tour" using a good

vendor (I prefer VisualTour.com). MLS data entry is just the start. True marketing must include non-MLS efforts that are still targeted to agents as well as buyers, such as flyers to the agents' offices and email addresses. The agent's listings must be syndicated to 20 consumer sites like zillow.com and trulia.com, and must be man-

ually entered on craigslist.org. The virtual tour vendor will do its own syndication, so it's important for the description on the virtual tour to be more extensive than just captions for each photo.

Then there's realtor.com, which will carry every MLS listing for free, but only in stripped down format with just four pictures and none of the public remarks from the MLS. The only way to get good exposure on realtor.com is to purchase "showcase" service and then utilize it. Some companies (like mine) buy that service for all their agents, but it's up to the agent to actually go into realtor.com's control panel and enter those enhancements.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that because most listings are sold by other agents that getting on the MLS is all it takes. It takes so much more, and that should guide you in your agent selection.

How to Evaluate a Listing Agent:

Performance Criteria

Of course, you'll want to know how many listings the agent has (and where), and this you can easily verify online. The real question, however, is how many of his listings have sold in the last 12 months and how many expired without selling. How many homes did he sell himself, including his own listings? But beware: agents know that you cannot verify this data, so you should be skeptical. If in doubt, get a different agent to obtain this data for you.

NOTE: If the agent says he or she has a buyer for your home, make him or her prove it by signing a two-day listing agreement (not on MLS).

Marketing Criteria

Do NOT ask how he will market your home. Instead, ask for the address of one or more current listings. **How he markets other listings is an absolute predictor of how he'll market yours.** Google the addresses. Look for them on realtor.com and REcolorado.com and see how they are promoted compared to similarly priced homes.

On realtor.com, make sure that the agent has **Showcase** service which allows for headlines, 25 pictures, virtual tours, video tours, extensive sales pitch, etc. If he doesn't have those on his current listings, he won't have them on yours.

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