



Top 10 Reasons to Hire a Real Estate Agent

By Elizabeth Weintraub, About.com Guide

With so much information readily available online, clients sometimes ask me, "Why should we hire a real estate agent?" They wonder, and rightfully so, if they couldn't buy or sell a home through the Internet or through regular marketing and advertising channels without representation, without a real estate agent. Some do OK, many don't. So if you've wondered the same thing, here are 10 reasons why you might want to consider hiring a professional real estate agent.

1. Education & Experience

You don't need to know everything about buying and selling real estate if you hire a real estate professional who does. Henry Ford once said that when you hire people who are smarter than you are, it proves you are smarter than they are. The trick is to find the right person. For the most part, they all cost about the same. Why not hire a person with more education and experience than you? We're all looking for more precious time in our lives, and hiring pros gives us that time.

2. Agents are Buffers

Agents take the spam out of your property showings and visits. If you're a buyer of new homes, your agent will whip out her sword and keep the builder's agents at bay, preventing them from biting or nipping at your heels. If you're a seller, your agent will filter all those phone calls that lead to nowhere from lookie loos and try to induce serious buyers to immediately write an offer.

3. Neighborhood Knowledge

Agents either possess intimate knowledge or they know where to find the industry buzz about your neighborhood. They can identify comparable sales and hand these facts to you, in addition to pointing you in the direction where you can find more data on schools, crime or demographics. For example, you may know that a home down the street was on the market for \$350,000, but an agent will know it had upgrades and sold at \$285,000 after 65 days on the market and after twice falling out of escrow.

4. Price Guidance

Contrary to what some people believe, agents do not select prices for sellers or buyers. However, an agent will help to guide clients to make the right choices for themselves. If a listing is at 7%, for example, an agent has a 7% vested interest in the sale, but the client has a 93% interest. Selling agents will ask buyers to weigh all the data supplied to them and to choose a price. Then based on market supply, demand and the conditions, the agent will devise a negotiation strategy.

5. Market Conditions Information

Real estate agents can disclose market conditions, which will govern your selling or buying process. Many factors determine how you will proceed. Data such as the average per square foot cost of



Top 10 Reasons to Hire a Real Estate Agent

similar homes, median and average sales prices, average days on market and ratios of list-to-sold prices, among other criteria, will have a huge bearing on what you ultimately decide to do.

6. Professional Networking

Real estate agents network with other professionals, many of whom provide services that you will need to buy or sell. Due to legal liability, many agents will hesitate to recommend a certain individual or company over another, but they do know which vendors have a reputation for efficiency, competency and competitive pricing. Agents can, however, give you a list of references with whom they have worked and provide background information to help you make a wise selection.

7. Negotiation Skills & Confidentiality

Top producing agents negotiate well because, unlike most buyers and sellers, they can remove themselves from the emotional aspects of the transaction and because they are skilled. It's part of their job description. Good agents are not messengers, delivering buyer's offers to sellers and vice versa. They are professionals who are trained to present their client's case in the best light and agree to hold client information confidential from competing interests.

8. Handling Volumes of Paperwork

One-page deposit receipts were prevalent in the early 1970s. Today's purchase agreements run 10 pages or more. That does not include the federal- and state-mandated disclosures nor disclosures dictated by local custom. Most real estate files average thicknesses from one to three inches of paper. One tiny mistake or omission could land you in court or cost you thousands. In some states, lawyers handle the disclosures, thank goodness!

9. Answer Questions After Closing

Even the smoothest transactions that close without complications can come back to haunt. For example, taxing authorities that collect property tax assessments, doc stamps or transfer tax can fall months behind and mix up invoices, but one call to your agent can straighten out the confusion. Many questions can pop up that were overlooked in the excitement of closing. Good agents stand by ready to assist. Worthy and honest agents don't leave you in the dust to fend for yourself.

10. Develop Relationships for Future Business

The basis for an agent's success and continued career in real estate is referrals. Few agents would survive if their livelihood was dependent on consistently drumming up new business. This emphasis gives agents strong incentives to make certain clients are happy and satisfied. It also means that an agent who stays in the business will be there for you when you need to hire an agent again. Many will periodically mail market updates to you to keep you informed and to stay in touch.