

Key points:

- Interview three agents from different companies. Make sure the companies you select can offer you broad market exposure.
- Take note that the real estate agents you interview are good listeners. They are supposed to work for your best interests, but they can't if they haven't paid attention to what you interests are.
- Hire an agent whom you trust to look out for you.

Questions to ask Realtors who want to represent you:

- **Is this your full-time job?** Part-time agents have other commitments that can get in the way of giving you full-time attention.
- **How long have you been licensed?** Getting a real estate license is easy compared to what it takes to stay with the business. Look for an experienced agent who shows a strong commitment to the profession and has been in the field for at least five years.
- **What awards have you won?** Successful realtors win awards and earn titles like "top producer." Most full-time agents have made it into the "Million Dollar Club" at least once.
- **How many properties have you sold in the past twelve months? How does this compare to the market average?** These questions will help you get a good idea of how much experience the agent has *and* how he/she stacks up compared to other agents.
- **How many days did it take you to sell the average home last year? How did it compare to the overall market?** The agent you interview should have these facts on hand, and be able to present market statistics from the local MLS to provide a comparison. How quickly a home is sold gives you a good indication of how skilled the agent is at pricing, marketing, showing, and negotiating.
- **How will you help me set a selling price for my house?** Successful real estate agents help their client's price their homes based on an analysis of market pricing, sales trends, neighborhood, and home condition. Beware the agent who quickly agrees with the price you want or recommends an inflated price. That person is more interested in *landing* you as a client than *helping* you as a client; the strategy is to get you to sign with them, list at your price, then adjust the price again and again until it finally reflects your home's true value.
- **How close to the initial asking prices of the homes you sold last year were the final sale prices?** This is one indication of how skilled the Realtor is at pricing homes and marketing to suitable buyers.
- **What will you do to market my house?** You don't want someone who's going to do a pricing analysis, put a For Sale sign in the yard, and hope for the best. Look for someone who has hard-hitting and innovative approaches to marketing and knows how to reach out to prospective buyers, show your home to its best advantage, and respond quickly to inquiries.
- **How will we communicate with each other?** Selling a home can be an emotional roller coaster, so you will want to know whether this Realtor will be there for you. Does she maintain office hours? Do you prefer phone, e-mail, or personal visits? Can you call or email her? Do you want updates twice a week or do you prefer not to be bothered unless there's a hot prospect? Do you want your realtor to work evenings and weekends? This is not a question with a correct answer, but how you judge the response will reflect your own desires.
- **What sort of support does your brokerage office provide to you?** Most real estate agents are connected to a larger brokerage offices, which gives them a large network of other agents, in-house support staff, access to market data, and connections such as attorneys and creative services that can get you to "sold" faster. Learning about the home office's services, performance standards, and success rate will give you a picture of the kind of team that will be backing up this agent's efforts on your behalf.
- **Can you connect me with some good vendors?** Good Realtors are well-connected Realtors and can be wonderful resources as you seek lenders, home improvement companies, and other home service providers. Agents should generally recommend more than one provider and let you know if they have any special relationship with or receive compensation from any of the providers.
- **May I call your three most recent clients for references?** Ask recent clients if they would work with this real estate agent again. Find out whether they were pleased with the communication style, follow-up, and work ethic of the Realtor.