

The goal is to maximize your bottom line. Choose an agent or broker that you feel you can trust, someone you believe will work hard to maximize and protect your interests and will do what they promise. Then, with that representative, determine a pricing strategy based on location, condition, market conditions and comparable sales data.

Select the right agent to sell your home

Selling a home can be a complex undertaking. Amazingly, many home sellers do not take the necessary care to select the right professional to represent their interests. With prices and equity skyrocketing, and the liability potential real estate transactions bring today, the need for experienced representation is more important now than ever.

All agents are not alike. Without a doubt, the choice of your agent or broker (a broker is an agent with a higher level of education, experience and responsibility) may be the biggest decision you make when selling your home.

Once you select an agent, every aspect of the transaction, from marketing and contract negotiations, to disclosures and inspections is managed by that agent. If you pick a poor or inexperienced agent, you are likely to receive weak representation. More important than company affiliation, the agent you select may make all the difference in your outcome, so choose carefully.

Unfortunately, many homeowners select an agent based on their brokerage fee and the price promised for the home. Some agents will "buy a listing," quoting an unrealistic sale price and low fee just to get your listing. Spending minimal money and effort to market the



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*Guest
column*

newspaper ad. Exposing your home to as many buyers as possible will likely increase showings, promote competition, and provide the best opportunity to maximize your bottom line. To best promote your home, it should be placed in the local Multiple Listing Service (MLS), making it available to more than 3,000 agents, their buyers and the Internet. Many discount firms do not include the MLS in their advertised programs, basically leaving sellers just a step above For Sale By Owner status. At a minimum, make sure the MLS is part of your home's marketing program.

Beyond the MLS there are many things that

property, the agent then works to convince the seller to eventually reduce their price, or hope that the market catches up to their pricing. This practice harms sellers by creating unrealistic expectations, missed buyer opportunities, longer marketing time, and usually only helps to sell competing properties.

The successful marketing and sale of a home requires more than just a sign in the yard and an occasional

can be done to market your home to its highest potential.

With more than 70 percent of buyers utilizing the Internet, choose an agent whose program includes Internet marketing. There are numerous other advertising resources available to agents. Obviously, the more extensive the marketing program, the greater your exposure — and potential results. This additional marketing significantly increases the agent's costs, and thus their risk, with no guarantee of return. That said, this is a risk strong real estate professionals are willing to undertake to achieve the highest price, quickest sale and cleanest possible transaction for our sellers.

As all agents are *not* alike, I recommend interviewing at least three to better understand the marketing process and to compare agents' strengths and services. Request a presentation and market analysis from each. Question each agent about their experience, whether they work full-time, and other basics including their detailed marketing program, preparing your home for sale, fees and costs, and an estimate of your net proceeds.

Regarding brokerage fees, the most important thing to know: they are negotiable. This fee usually is stated as a percentage of the sale price; is subject to the successful

completion of the transaction and is typically divided between the listing agent/company and a buyer's agent/company.

Again, all real estate agents are *not* alike. Would cost be your first consideration when choosing a physician, attorney or accountant to protect your interests with a serious medical, legal or tax issue? With so much at stake both financially and legally, why trust the sale of your home, likely your largest financial asset, to someone whose best attribute is their fee?

I am not suggesting one should ignore costs. The goal is to maximize your bottom line. Choose an agent or broker that you feel you can trust, someone you believe will work hard to maximize and protect your interests, and will do what they promise. Then, with that representative, determine a pricing strategy based on location, condition, market conditions and comparable sales data. Experience, aggressive marketing and personal service really do make a difference. Be well represented.

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