

Questions Every Seller Should Ask

when hiring a real estate agent

introduction

Times change, and so does the real estate market. It's not always easy to keep up with it, whether you last sold a home five years ago, twenty years ago, or never. A real estate agent is the perfect pilot to help you through this process. If you've been thinking about selling your home, use this guide to know which questions to ask—and which answers to look for—to help you decide on the best agent to ensure a smooth transaction.





WHAT ARE YOUR CREDENTIALS?

You'll want to confirm the agent is fully licensed in your state and is a member of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) since this demands ethical behavior. In addition, they should belong to the local real estate trade association, which enables them to participate in community and regional events to nurture relationships with other agents. Most times, sales are cobrokered by two agencies, so having a good rapport with other agents can help your transaction proceed more smoothly.

Finally, the agent should subscribe to the multiple listing service (MLS), a professional online tool only agents can access. This platform is used to construct an analysis of the trends and sales history of your home, neighborhood, and community, which can help you and your agent decide on the best listing price.

IS REAL ESTATE YOUR FULL-TIME OCCUPATION?

Most real estate agents work as independent contractors, which means they ultimately decide the days and times they work with their clients. You should inquire about their availability to determine if they'll be able to meet your needs; otherwise, you may end up receiving less attention than you anticipated.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A REAL ESTATE AGENT?

The real estate agent landscape is changing continuously since people are always entering and exiting the field. Because of this, you may encounter an agent with limited experience. However, this isn't necessarily a knock against them, as they may have a strong support team and substantial training; many new agents join a team of other seasoned agents rather than working solo. They may even be able to give you more time than others who have a plate full of existing clients.

WHAT MAKES YOU DIFFERENT FROM OTHER AGENTS?

Most agents will be prepared for this question if they don't volunteer it themselves, and many of the answers will likely be similar. As they respond, observe their professionalism and how they answer or explain information. This can tell you a lot about them as a person and as an agent.

WHAT IS YOUR COMMISSION RATE?

The commission structure has changed over recent years. The industry-standard rate of 6 percent no longer holds true, as rates now vary widely by area, the agent, and the company's policies. Be sure to inquire about their commission structure and the services provided. However, be mindful that a low rate may offer you only some of the services you want or expect.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN THE AREA?

Each community boasts its own distinctive qualities. Knowing those characteristics may be a significant selling point when selecting an agent to sell your home. That said, if someone has not spent several years in your community, don't let that dissuade you from hiring them—sometimes newcomers go above and beyond to educate themselves about the uniqueness of your town.



HAVE YOU SOLD ANY HOMES IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD?

You'll want to know where the agent conducts most of their business. This can provide a lens into which neighborhoods and towns they specialize in and if they have a firm grasp on pricing and the existing competition. You might also want to look for an agent who has some knowledge of the neighborhoods and surrounding areas where you are interested in buying your next home.

WHAT IS YOUR PRICING STRATEGY?

Thanks to the internet, most sellers and buyers have a sense of how much homes are selling for in their neighborhood. However, online resources like Zillow and Redfin are only estimates, as they can't consider each home's nuance. But while pricing may seem cut-and-dried on the surface, it actually takes a lot of time and thought to price a home effectively. Details like whether it sits on a corner or an oversized or wooded lot or if there were any recent upgrades or renovations can all add significant value. An agent should be able to consider all these factors to come up with the best price. After all, the end goal is to sell for the most money in the least amount of time.

WHAT'S YOUR PHILOSOPHY ON PRICE REDUCTIONS?

It's important to know ahead of time what your agent's approach is to reducing the price of your home. It's not uncommon for them to request that you agree in advance (some agents will even include this in the listing agreement) to make a price adjustment at the thirty-day mark, or maybe sooner, if your home isn't getting enough showings or offers within that time frame. Therefore, it's essential that you feel comfortable with their methods in case a price reduction becomes necessary.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR MARKETING PLAN?

A sound, effective marketing plan is essential for driving foot traffic to your home. This includes any print and digital collateral, social media activity, open houses, and photography. The more eyes on your home, the more likely you will receive multiple offers. Ask the agent to show you their marketing plan so you can approve it before committing to listing your home with them.

WILL YOU HELP ME STAGE MY HOME?

Getting your home ready to sell involves more than signing a listing agreement and placing a sign on your front yard; staging your home is part and parcel of this preparation. Your real estate agent can approach it with an objective eye, allowing them to make constructive, reasonable suggestions to help you show off your home's best features.

DO YOU DO OPEN HOUSES?

Discuss the agent's philosophy on conducting open houses. They should explain why they think it's an important activity for marketing your home—or not. Also, consider asking if they or one of their associates would conduct the open house; if your home has unique features or needs some extra attention, you may prefer that your agent, who would understand these factors best, represent it. Based on their responses, you can then decide if their strategy is right for you.

WHO WILL BE MY MAIN POINT OF CONTACT?

Most times, your agent will be your main point of contact, however, some may appoint one of their licensed associates. If this is the case, you'll want to ask who this person will be and request an in-person meeting to make sure they are the right fit before committing to signing with the agent. This individual must be reliable and guarantee, as best as possible, a timely response to questions and issues that need to be addressed.

CAN YOU GIVE ME THREE REFERENCES?

A seasoned agent should be able to provide you with several referrals and testimonials. A new agent may not have these just yet, but you could instead ask for a reference from someone they have worked for to get a sense of their character and work ethic.



A SELLER'S QUESTIONNAIRE TEMPLATE

What are your credentials?

What is your pricing strategy?

Is real estate your full-time occupation?

What's your philosophy on price reductions?

How long have you been a real estate agent?

Can you describe your marketing plan?

What makes you different from other agents?

Will you help me stage my home?

What is your commission rate?

Do you do open houses?

How long have you lived in the area?

Who will be my point of contact?

Have you sold any homes in my neighborhood?

Can you give me three references?

conclusion

There will always be many real estate agents you can choose from. To find the best partnership, ask the right questions, make sure to push for sufficient answers, and take copious notes. A professional, dedicated agent will have no problem answering all your questions. Then the decision is up to you; after all, only you can know if they're a good match.

