

## About.com Home Buying / Selling

### Finding a Real Estate Agent

By Elizabeth Weintraub, About.com Guide

Finding a good real estate agent / broker is essential to enjoying a painless real estate transaction. The saying is "20% of the agents do 80% of the business," and it is true. The question is how can you find a good real estate agent? The best agent for you doesn't necessarily work at the largest brokerage, close the most transactions or make the most money. The best agent for you is an experienced professional who will listen to you, conduct herself in an ethical manner and knows your market.

#### 1. REALTORS® and Real Estate Agents



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#### 2. Referrals

Most real estate agents stay in business because satisfied clients refer them to friends, family, neighbors and coworkers. Ask the people around you who they have used and ask them to describe their experiences with this real estate agent. Successful agents make customer satisfaction their number one priority and put their customers' needs before their own. Try to find an agent who goes above and beyond her responsibilities. She'll be the agent whose praises your friends sing loudest.

#### 3. Search Online for Agent Listings

There are plenty of Web sites that will refer agents to you but that is no assurance of quality. The agents they refer are those who have paid the Web site owners a fee to be listed in their directory. A better bet is to Google the top real estate companies in your area, go to those Web sites and look up profiles of individual agents at offices near you. Agents who are experienced will tell you but newer agents might have more time to spend with you. Look for customer testimonials.

#### 4. Attend Open Houses

By going to open houses, you can meet real estate agents in a non-threatening working environment and interact with them. Collect business cards and make notes on them. If you're thinking about selling your home, pay attention to how the agent is showing the home. Is she polite and informative; appear knowledgeable? Does she hand out professional-looking promotional material about the home? Is she trying to sell features of the home? Or is she sitting in a corner reading a book, ignoring you?

#### 5. Track Neighborhood Signs

Pay attention to the listing signs in your neighborhood. Make note of the day they go up and when the sold sign appears. The agent who sells listings the fastest might be better for you than the agent with the largest number of "for sale" signs. Results speak volumes.

#### 6. Using Print Advertising

Real estate agents run real estate ads for two purposes. The first is to sell specific real estate. The second is to promote the real estate agent. Look in your local Sunday newspaper for ads in your targeted neighborhood. Then look up the Web sites of the agents who are advertising. These agents could be specialists in your neighborhood. Call and ask them about their experience.

#### 7. Recommendations from Professionals

Ask other real estate agents for referrals. Agents are happy to refer buyers and sellers to associates, especially if the service you need is not a specialty of the agent who is referring you. Some agents specialize in residential resales while others work exclusively with new home builders. Other agents sell only commercial or investment property. Mortgage brokers are also a resource for agent referrals as many brokers have first-hand knowledge of exceptional agents. Pros tend to refer pros.

At the time of writing, Elizabeth Weintraub, DRE # 00697006, is a Broker-Associate at Lyon Real Estate in Sacramento, California.

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