



By Jill Wood
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There have never been more choices for home buyers and sellers than there are today. It seems that every week there's a new discount broker, online real estate site or for-sale-by-owner company. So why is it that four out of five consumers still choose to work with a full-service real estate agent?

Our customers tell us that it's a combination of achieving desired results, trust in our experience, convenience, and peace of mind.

Every real estate transaction is different, with variables that include the characteristics of the property, the timing, and the motivation and personality of the buyer and seller. When an agent does their job well, it all looks easy. Full-service agents anticipate problems, manage contractual issues, and utilize their experience and good judgment to act as an advocate for their clients

Between mutual acceptance and close, many unforeseen events can occur: a fair housing claim, a dishonored earnest money check, an abandoned on-site sewage system, a pest inspector who lacks a proper license.

With the moving parts of a transaction ever changing and the financial repercussions so great, the peace of mind gained by working with an experienced, full-service agent is invaluable.

Even when everything goes smoothly, a lot of work goes into selling a home. Here's what a professional full-service agent does as part of a transaction.

Prepare the home for sale

Statistics show that a home that is properly staged sells more quickly, and for more money. It's not unusual for our agents to hire contractors, painters and landscapers to make sure the seller gets the best possible price for their home.

Price the home

A good agent will make you money, not cost you money, by getting the most for your property. Valuing a home is part art and part science—there is no set formula. Because no two homes are exactly alike, looking at comparable sales is just one part of pricing. An agent also looks at distinctive features of a home, remodeling and upgrades, the latest market conditions and local economic trends.

Market the home

Agents market homes through the Multiple Listing Service, on web sites, in advertisements and through their extensive network of colleagues. The greater the exposure, the larger the number of interested buyers and the quicker the sale. That's important: MLS figures show that the longer a home is on the market, the less likely the seller is to receive their asking price.

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Show the home to prospective buyers

Experienced agents can quickly separate qualified prospects from window-shoppers. That saves the seller time and inconvenience.

Negotiate the best possible deal

Negotiating skills are one of the greatest benefits of working with a full-service agent. The agent will evaluate purchase offers and advise the seller on counter-offers and proper contract provisions. The agent also explains how contingencies such as appraisal, financing and inspections will affect the transaction. If an inspection problem or financing glitch occurs, the agent will negotiate a solution to the problem.

Prepare all necessary paperwork

The paperwork that accompanies the purchase and sale agreement includes documents regarding earnest money, financing, inspection, disclosures, contingencies and other special conditions of the sale. By ensuring that all forms are prepared correctly an experienced agent protects the client's interests, and also reduces their liability.

Much has been made about the commissions full-service real estate agents receive. The average percentage paid an agent is comparable with the fee many people pay a financial planner annually to manage their assets. A home is often an individual's single greatest asset, and buying or selling a home is most likely the largest financial transaction people will make. A full-service agent ensures that you maximize that asset.

Real estate is a customer-oriented business, and customers have always driven the market. There have always been alternatives to full-service agents, and some customers choose to work with a limited service agent for a lower fee. Full service is simply a different business model built on a reputation of offering more value, not less. That seems to resonate with consumers. Ultimately, they make the choice—and according to the National Association of Realtors, over 80% prefer to work with a full-service agent.

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