

## Why Should I Use a REALTOR®?

A common misconception amongst the general public is that real estate agents are all the same. Let me assure you, all real estate agents are not created equal. This article will discuss the difference between a real estate agent and a REALTOR® and also demonstrate the benefits of using a REALTOR® as opposed to going it alone.

A REALTOR® is a member of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®. REALTORS® are held to a code of ethics similar in severity to those of medicine and law. The code of ethics has been in place for almost 100 years and is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that REALTORS® continue to behave as professionals in an ethical and appropriate manner. The code of ethics is the main tool that sets a nonmember agent apart from a REALTOR®. As a customer, working with a REALTOR® will give you the assurance that you will get fair and ethical treatment in every transaction. This is not just some unwritten law that REALTORS® pledge to abide by either; they are responsible for their actions and subject to punishment by the governing body.

Knowing that a REALTOR® is held to a higher standard is very important, but there are many other benefits to using a REALTOR® in a real estate transaction:

1. Experience: REALTORS® have been through the buying and selling process. They are experienced and equipped to handle any surprises or potential pitfalls that may come your way. Real estate is the largest single investment most people will make in their lifetime. Doesn't it make sense to use a professional who can help you through that process to the end? If you were being sued over a sum of \$10,000, you would certainly seek the guidance of a professional &ndash; a lawyer, perhaps &ndash; to help you through that process. Why would an investment of 10 times that much (or more) be any different?

2. Advertising: REALTORS® can help you price and market your property through avenues that are not available to the general public. The pricing and marketing of your property is the most important part of selling your home. Without proper exposure, your opportunities to sell your home dramatically reduce. Pricing your home too high will result in a loss of showings, and you will be wasting your time with the wrong individuals looking at your home. Pricing your home too low could cost you thousands of dollars in money you could have banked. REALTORS® have access to the local multi-listing service (MLS) databases, which allows them to view all local listings from any agency. This service features your home on numerous websites, giving your home maximum exposure to the rest of the country as well as the rest of the world.

3. Negotiation: REALTORS® are negotiators. There are so many elements to consider during the negotiating process, it is invaluable to have a professional working for you. When you take into account inspections, pricing, financing, title issues, repairs, fixtures staying with the home, possessions, human emotions, etc, there are an infinite number of factors to consider &ndash; and stay on top of &ndash; during negotiations. A REALTOR® will ensure that you are able to get the best deal for your situation and will have a good idea of what is possible and/or realistic.

As one additional note for sellers, according to the 2006 National Association of REALTORS® profile of Home Buyers and Sellers, the average For Sale by Owner home sold for \$187,200, while the average home sold through a REALTOR® brought in \$247,000. Those numbers paint a very obvious picture; it pays to use a REALTOR®.

4. Motivation: REALTORS® do not get paid unless they sell your home. In other words, they want to work for you! Imagine a world where lawyers did not get paid unless they won your case, or doctors did not get paid unless the procedure was successful. With REALTORS®, this is a reality. There is no greater motivational tool for your agent than to know that they don't put food on the table unless your home sells. If you dangle a carrot in front of a horse, it is going to run faster. That is just the way things work.

Now that you can see the benefits of utilizing a REALTOR® for all your real estate needs, there shouldn't be much of a

decision to make. Aside from the code of ethics REALTORS® operate under, their superior experience, advertising opportunities, negotiation capabilities, and motivation to sell your house make them the obvious choice. Make sure you call a REALTOR® first when it is time to buy or sell a home.