How To Pick a Real Estate Agent Who's Right for You

Published on May 31st, 2022 | 8-9 min read **Stacy Sare Cohen** Contributing Author

WORKING WITH REAL ESTATE AGENTS

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ATTRACT BUYERS

At HomeLight, our vision is a world where every real estate transaction is simple, certain, and satisfying. Therefore, we promote strict editorial integrity in each of our posts.

ccording to the Association of Real Estate License Law Officials (ARELLO), there are over 3 million real estate agents with active licenses in the United States, so how do you find a great one? Finding the right real estate agent to sell your biggest investment can feel like a crapshoot if you don't know

what to look for. We dug into the research and spoke with top agent Miranda

Biedenharn from Dayton, Ohio, for expert advice and actionable tips on how to

pick a real estate agent committed to your best interests. What makes a great agent With all the agents working in the business, how can you find a great one? Biedenharn, a top agent who works with over 76% more single-family homes than the average Dayton agent explains "We all have the same toolbox to navigate the process; [what makes a great agent] is how they manipulate the tools to work in your best interest."

Biedenharn believes the following agent qualities can help sellers get over the top [in a real estate deal]: Communication level Connectedness to other agents in the area • Level of expertise

What makes a top agent

organizations, media outlets, and real estate technology companies such as

that rank real estate agents such as real estate associations, trade

A top agent is a real estate agent or Realtor® who has earned recognition for being a top producer. Top producers can earn their status from organizations

• Education level, such as additional certifications

- HomeLight based on analyzing the following metrics:
- **Days on market:** how many days the home stayed on the market • Transaction sides: number of buyer or seller side transactions

• Gross commissions: earned commissions before payouts

• Units sold: number of properties sold annually

• Sales volume: total price of homes sold in a given year

for as much as 10% more than the average real estate agent. It takes just two

minutes to match clients with the best real estate agents, who will contact you

A great agent has hyperlocal experience in the neighborhoods where they sell

homes are selling for block to block. They also know the selling price of homes

They have the knowledge of amenities in your specific neighborhood that are in

high in-demand such as built-in pools and large backyards in family-friendly

properties. They're aware of the best schools, crime statistics, and the prices

in your community versus the community around the corner.

- **Connect with a Top Agent** Our data shows the top 5% of agents across the U.S. help clients sell their home

and guide you through the process.

Find Agent

Knows the local area

suburbs, which are key bits of information for attracting buyers. Suggests upgrades that increase home value Buyers will pay 7% more for homes with better curb appeal, according to HomeLight's survey, Top Agent Insights for New Year 2022. An experienced agent

knows that improving basic yard care will bring a 539% ROI and increase home

value by \$4,500 on average — and giving a tired exterior a fresh coat of paint

will cost around \$3,000 but will boost resale value by an average of \$7,500.

lighting, kitchen and bathroom faucets, and cabinet pulls and knobs. Connects sellers with local professionals Whether your house needs home improvements such as repainting, a new

driveway paved and your landscaping improved — a good agent has a network

garage door, a new bathroom fixture, a good power washing — or your

of contacts in their address book they can recommend. These can include

contractors, plumbers, handypersons, deep cleaning professionals, home

For the interior, good agents recommend inexpensive upgrades that appeal to

buyers such as swapping outdated fixtures and hardware for more modern

organizers, stagers, and many more home professionals to get your home in pristine condition and good repair. Plans a winning marketing strategy Expert agents have a collection of proven marketing strategies and sales techniques in their toolbox. They advertise on the Multiple Listing Service

(MLS), the largest database of real estate listings nationwide, and also post

Key marketing strategies top agents recommend to sell homes faster and at

outlets.

higher price points include:

Taking professional photos

Decluttering and deep cleaning

• Staging a home for a quick sale

Writing enticing listing descriptions

• Recommending paint colors that sell houses

their clients' listings on real estate websites, social media, and other advertising

Negotiates real estate deals with skill and grace One of the biggest ways an expert agent can help a seller is by negotiating a real estate deal. An experienced agent who knows the market "has that knowledge that you don't have as a seller," says Biedenharn.

As an example, a buyer can offer a seller their asking price and try to work

will turn around and tell the seller that I won't let you pay a penny of the

closing costs into the deal. But an agent who knows we're in a seller's market

buyer's closing costs. Instead, they can offer the buyer furniture that caught

their eye that the seller plans on replacing when they move—for instance, the

As another negotiation strategy in a seller's market, an adept agent can work

who's the best fit for them."

Know your selling goals

Biedenharn.

interests in mind.

continuing education

into as well."

data.

affiliated with that sale."

dining set and living room sofa.

comes out too low.

- an appraisal gap guarantee into the deal if a buyer plans to finance the home purchase. This protects the seller by having the buyer pay the difference
- "Clients need to prioritize where they're at in the process of selling their homes, knowing exactly

what it is they're looking for so when they get with

an agent they can make the best decision about

between the purchase price and the appraised value if the home appraisal

Miranda Biedenharn Real Estate Agent How to pick a real estate agent

The first step in picking a real estate agent is to know your selling goals. "Clients

occupancy date into the contract that works for them (that Biedenharn says is a

big one in this market). Finding an agent who suggests putting an extra week

into the contract for you to have to move out — instead of the day following

closing — might make you realize they're a professional who has your best

• Seller Representative Specialist (SRS): a two-day course designed to enhance

• Certified Residential Specialist (CRS): 16 to 30 hours of education plus annual

• Military Relocation Professional (MRP): a one-day course and webinar

A good agent should not make you work to learn about their [sales history],"

would be something I would look for as a client, how prepared [that agent is] to

says Biedenharn. "They should bring it to the table for you. She says, "that

"If I wanted to research an agent's sales data, I would look on real estate

websites to see if agents have logged in their sales data." Biedenharn says,

"Real List is one of them and RPR is probably another one that clients can get

Biedenhard says you can also find sales information about agents on county

record websites. "Some counties log the agent's information as far as being

designed to address military relocation, timelines, and stressors

knowing exactly what it is they're looking for so when they get with an agent

need to prioritize where they're at in the process of selling their homes,

they can make the best decision about who's the best fit for them," says

Sellers can look to real estate agents for input such as negotiating the

Specialists in the real estate industry receive training and certifications that make them more qualified than an agent without that credential. A few real estate specializations include:

selling performance and professional standards

Ask agents about their specializations

Seniors Real Estate Specialist (SRES): a two-day training focusing on housing options in age-restricted communities, the use of pensions and retirement in real estate transactions, and how to protect clients from loan fraud Verify agent track records

respond, and to back it up with some kind of data."

Check online reviews Reviews are going to be another big one, says Biedenharn. "I would say most agents are putting their reviews either in Google and [real estate websites]."

"You're going to find your best reviews on these pages because they come

directly from the clients versus potentially some third party." Make sure to

Another way to find real estate agents is to ask the people you know. If you

have friends who have sold their house recently and had a great experience,

check the agent's local market experience, sales records, and days on market

Interview at least three agents An interview provides the perfect opportunity to "talk to different agents and interview those folks about their knowledge base, share your ultimate goals,

and then decide who in your gut sounds like they know what they're doing and

not just blowing smoke at you," explains Biedenharn. Asking questions also lets

signatures and mobile notaries if I'm out of the area? 8. What are the average days on market for your listings? 9. How many homes have you sold in my price range? 10. Can you provide me with a referral list?

By now you've spoken to a few real estate agents, read the testimonials, asked

questions, and learned whether they've sold homes in your area in recent

months. However, you also have a sense of their level of preparedness and

"I think the most important thing is the preparedness they come to you with,

the level of patience that they have with you and they don't push you in any

particular way that is not necessarily in your best interest," says Biedenharn.

Biedenharn also recommends looking at what your particular comfort level is

with that person. "Because it's going to be a rollercoaster of a deal; something

7. How do you plan on leveraging different technology like electronic

"You have to feel like you can trust your agent at the end of the day, like they have your best intentions in mind, and that they have the expertise and the heart to get you through that transaction."

Header Image Source: (Dillon Kydd / Unsplash)

always comes up in a deal," she says.

Christopher Rogacz is an associate editor for HomeLight's Seller Resource Center based in Washington, DC. His background is in journalism, architecture, urban policy, and housing. He holds a master's degree from the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University.

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see if they can make an introduction to their real estate agent. Other sources include your neighbors, family members, and local merchants you chat with at the stores you frequent.

you get a sense of each real estate agent's style.

Ask the following questions

6. How do you plan to market my home?

Find the right seller-agent match

their personality style.

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Christopher Rogacz

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Get referrals from people you know

One, for example is HomeLight's customer reviews.

1. How long have you been in the business? 2. What sets you apart from other agents? 3. Do you have any specializations or certifications? 4. What is your rank amongst your colleagues in the area? 5. How many homes have you sold in my area in the past year?

Stacy Sare Cohen Contributing Author Stacy Sare Cohen is a seasoned content writer with a passion for real estate, home design, decor, and home improvement. She holds a B.A. in English from UCLA and has been published in Apartment Therapy, Angi, HomeAdvisor, and elsewhere. When Stacy's not creating content, she's dreaming up new project ideas for her newly remodeled condo.

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