

## How To Choose a Real Estate Agent

The Yakima Association of REALTORS® office often gets calls from homeowners interested in putting their house on the market soon. The first question they ask is, “Who are your top salespeople?” While dollar volume may be one of the factors in choosing an agent, we recommend that you also think about several other issues when choosing a real estate agent that best fits you.

The February 1995 issue of Kiplinger’s magazine listed 7 factors in picking an agent correctly. Many of them **ALSO APPLY TO HOME BUYERS.**

◆ **Hire a REALTOR®.** A REALTOR® is a broker or agent who is a member of the local Association of Realtors®, as well as the state and national associations. While there are both good and bad REALTORS®, the fact that an agent has joined a professional association that offers continued training and holds its members to a Code of Ethics is a positive sign.

◆ **Seek a full-time, experienced and busy agent.** You want somebody who works 40 hours or more a week and who relies on real estate to earn a living.

◆ **Ask for strong credentials.** Your agent should be able to show you more than a sales award. Look for someone with a broker’s license, which requires additional knowledge and training. Or, look for designations such as GRI, meaning that they are Graduates of the Realtor Institute. A CRS designation requires a minimum number of closed transactions, a GRI or 10 years of experience and extra hours of study.

◆ **Demand references.** The best references are from customers for whom the agent has sold houses previously. Even better are people from your neighborhood who have sold houses similar to your own. Find out all you can about what the seller liked and disliked about the agent and the entire process.

◆ **Look for evidence the agent does his or her homework.** If you know more about

your neighborhood than the agent, keep looking. An agent must not only be knowledgeable about a specific area, he or she must also be comfortable working there.

◆ **Ask to see a detailed marketing plan.** Your agent should be able to tell you, in writing, all of the things that he or she will do to sell your home, including a schedule of advertisements, open houses, brochures and other marketing techniques. Make sure there is a reasonable timetable in which these things will be done.

◆ **Make sure the agent has good accessibility.** Staying in touch via cell phone, fax machine, voice mail and beeper is important when offers start to come in on your home.

The Yakima Association of REALTORS® also adds these considerations to the list.

◆ **Find the right personality “fit”.** Keep in mind that your Realtor® will be in your home often. Finding an agent that you feel comfortable working with will help you have a better experience.

◆ **Find out if the majority of the agent’s business comes from representing sellers or buyers.** Some Realtors® are great at listing and marketing properties, but do not represent buyers’ interests well. And vice versa. Some agents excel at representing buyer’s interests. Buyer’s agents should always be willing to set down in writing what work they will perform for the client. It is recommended that prospective homebuyers obtain a signed Buyer Broker Agreement Form. Many buyer’s agents will have an ABR designation, or Accredited Buyer’s Representative, which indicates additional training taken.

Volume of sales is only one of many things to consider when hiring a real estate agent. With thousands of dollars in commissions on the line, it pays to sift through the pool of agents to find one with the right fit for you.