



10 Questions to Ask Before You Hire a Realtor®

Not all real estate Sales Representatives are the same. If you decide to seek the help of a Salesperson when selling or buying your home, you need some information before you make any decisions. A Realtor® is the person in charge of working for your best interest, marketing your home and servicing you until after the keys are exchange regardless of the company s/he works for.

Picking a realtor® is one of those critical issues that can cost or make you thousands of dollars.

There are very specific questions you should be asking to ensure that you get the best representation for your needs. Some Realtors® may prefer that you don't ask these questions, because the knowledge you'll gain from their honest answers will give you a very good idea about what outcome you can expect from using them. And let's face it – in real estate, as in life – not all things are created equal.

Hiring a realtor® is just like any hiring process – with you on the boss's side of the desk.

It's critical that you make the right decision about who will handle what is probably the largest financial investment you will ever make.

1. What makes you different? Why should I list my home with you?

It's a much tougher Real Estate market than it was a decade ago. What **unique marketing plans and programs** does the realtor® have in place to make sure that your home stands out favourably versus other competing homes? Do they offer a guaranteed sale program; is this the salesperson that buys it or the company? Do you still qualify for the program if you have already bought a home or don't plan on buying a home? There are hundreds of other homes for sale within the same area. What things are done to get you as many prospective buyers in as possible? What does the realtor® offer that is different from others to help you sell your home in the least amount of time with the least amount of hassle and for the most amount of money? How long has the realtor® been active full time? Does s/he have a team to service you to the fullest? Does s/he try to get top dollar for the Seller or simply tries to sell it fast to get that sale? **Does s/he offer a lower commission fee than the average**, and if so, how is the commission disbursed between the marketing, commission to the other realtor representing the buyers and her/himself? Do s/he offer a lower **commission if s/he sells it her/himself? If so, does the rebate apply whether or not the home is sold by her/himself and any of her/his team members?** Will the home be shown by she/him or only the other team member? Don't get deceived later, find out now. "You pay for what you get" is an expression that gets used with reason. **If a realtor® cannot negotiate a decent pay for her/himself, how can s/he negotiate top dollar for their client?**

2. What is your personal track record and reputation in the market place?

It may seem like everywhere you look, Realtors® and real estate companies are boasting about being #1 for this and that or quoting you the number of homes they've sold. Like many homeowners, you've probably become immune to much of this information. But who really does the sales? These company's track records are mostly based on the volume of all their **Realtors® combined but individually average sales fewer than 10 homes a year**. Is their advertisement tailored to promote your home or **their own image**? This volume makes it difficult for any of them to have great impact marketing your home, because they can't raise the money it takes to afford the advertising and special programs to give your home a higher profile. Also, at this low level, they probably can't afford to sign yearly contracts with the advertisers to hold premium pages, to invest in the best possible tools such as internet programs, office equipment, computers or hiring assistants, which means that they're running around trying to do all the components of the job themselves, which can also mean that the service may suffer. Alternatively, you may think, "*Why should I care about how many homes one realtor® sold over another. The only thing I care about is whether they can sell my home quickly for the most amount of money.*" Here's why: If you want your home sold fast and for top dollar, you **should** be asking the Realtor® you interview how many homes s/he or the team have sold and not the combination of all the sales of a company. I'm sure you will agree that success in real estate is selling homes. If 1 Realtor® is selling a lot of homes where another is selling only a handful a year, ask yourself why this might be? What things are these 2 realtors® doing differently that could impact numbers?

3. What is your philosophy on listing low or major price reductions to sell fast?

Listing too low or too high can be harmful. If the home is listed high just to get your listing with the intention to reduce your listing by a large sum down the road could send the wrong message to the buyers. If the home is listed too low, it would indeed sell fast but who does it really benefit?

4. What are your marketing plans for my home and how does it affect the type of service you will get? What is the Realtor®'s budget in advertising a home s/he lists? What media does s/he target (newspaper, magazine, internet and which position)? Does the Realtor® promote her/his image or your home first? Does s/he have a well developed Website? What does s/he do to attract general traffic to that Website? What does s/he know about the effectiveness of one ad over the other? Does s/he test their ads? Will you see where and how the property is advertised? Will you see what is being advertised to the public and other Realtors on MLS? Will you be able to review the feature sheet/MLS remarks? Will you be provided a well planned ad schedule, so you know when and where your home is being advertised? Will the photos be real and appealing? Will you be updated on the status of your home; feedback from visits, market updates? If so, at which frequency? Will buyers interested in your home be followed up with? Will s/he try to generate multiple offers? How?

5. Does your Broker/Company control your advertising or do you? If your Realtor® is not in control of their own advertising, then your home will be competing for advertising space not only with this Realtor®'s other listings, but also with the listings of every other Realtor® in the brokerage.

6. What have you sold in my area? Realtors® are licensed to sell anywhere within a province. Their primary duty is to be fully informed of the market area they service (comparable sales and what is available for sale). If the realtor specializes in relocation, it is a must to be knowledgeable in all areas of town with a 50-60 km radius. A Realtor® is hired to sell a home to its maximum value and to expose it to the masses. The more a home is exposed, and not just locally as buyers can be anywhere, the higher are the chances of selling faster and at its top value. Don't limit yourself.

7. On average, when your listings sell, how close is the selling price to the asking price and how long does it take for your listings to sell? The statistics are based on MLS® reporting. Is this Realtor®'s performance higher or lower than the average? Does this realtor® tend to sell faster or slower than the average? Their performance on these key facts will help you predict how they will negotiate for your home and how long it will take your home to sell.

8. How many Buyers are you currently working with? Obviously, the more buyers your Realtor® attracts to your home, the better your chances are of selling quickly. It will also impact the sale price because a realtor® reaching many buyers can set up an auction-like atmosphere where many buyers bid on your home at the same time. Ask them to describe the system they have for attracting buyers. Does the Realtor® bring a background of repeat business/referrals and therefore potential quality buyers to your listing? Does the Realtor® have experience in the field of relocation which allows steady flow of new buyers to your listing?

9. Do you have testimonials from clients that I could refer to? A reference list of clients I could contact? Ask to see this list, and then proceed.

10. What happens if I'm not happy with the job you are doing to get my home sold? Can I cancel my listing contract? Be wary of Realtors® that lock you into a lengthy listing contract where their Broker will not allow a cancellation prior to the expiry or where the Realtor® can get out of what he promised you but you can't. How confident is your Realtor® in the service s/he will provide you? Will s/he allow you to cancel your contract without penalty if you're not satisfied with the service offered?

