

# PERSONAL FINANCES

## Do's And Don'ts For Finding The Right Real Estate Agent

(NAPSA)— Many Americans are thinking about moving, for any number of reasons—from seeking a home with more space to changing jobs. Buying or selling a home is likely one of the biggest financial transactions you will ever make and it can often be a complicated and time-consuming endeavor. If you enlist the help of a real estate professional, however, the process can be made considerably less stressful and much more enjoyable.

So what's the benefit of using a real estate agent? A full-service real estate agent can provide you with suggestions for getting your home ready for sale and information on prices of comparable properties to help you establish an asking price. When it comes time to list your house, an agent can advertise and market your home and show it to prospective buyers. Once you have an interested buyer, a real estate agent can help you negotiate as well as make arrangements for the closing.

As you begin the process of buying or selling a home, look for a seasoned, knowledgeable real estate professional who understands local market conditions and has the specific experience to best meet your needs. With a little up-front research and some helpful hints from GMAC Real Estate (<http://www.gmacrealestate.com>), you can be on your way to finding the best real estate agent for you and your family in practically no time:



- **DON'T**—Always go with the first real estate agent you meet. Take the time to interview several agents to understand which agent will best meet your needs. It may be that first one, it may not.

- **DON'T**—Let family members or friends “give it a go” at selling your home. While it can be nice to help a loved one or friend get a foot in the door and a commission, it is best to go with a real estate professional with experience and a proven track record in your marketplace.

- **DON'T**—Use part-time agents; those who practice real estate in their spare time. Real estate transactions are complex endeavors and you need agents who are committed to your transaction (and their careers) and who know the ins and outs of the process.

- **DO**—Check with family and friends for the names of agents they would recommend.

- **DO**—Find agents who specialize in your neighborhood and your specific type of home. Interview agents with experience that

matches your needs and make sure to ask whether they have a comprehensive customer satisfaction plan in place. Find out what their customer satisfaction rating is and whether they will put in writing, up front, the services they will provide for you.

- **DO**—Ask agents for a market analysis that lets you compare your house to others to ensure that the agent you choose has done his or her homework and fully understands the nuances of your market.

- **DO**—Ask each agent to share a list of past houses he or she has sold, including the list price and the price at which the house was sold. Also, ask for the average length of time it took to sell these houses as compared to the average length of time for other houses in your market.

- **DO**—Carefully compare the proposed marketing plans for your home that each agent presents to you. How your home is marketed will play a central role in its sale. Be sure to pay extra attention to how your property will be marketed online. Ask your agent how he or she plans to drive traffic to your home to generate multiple offers.

- **DO**—Ask agents for references from their last three clients. If they hesitate, they are likely the wrong agent for you.

- **DO**—Check for the personality “click factor” of your prospective agent. In addition to choosing the agent who offers the kind of experience you need to help you buy or sell a home, select someone whom you will enjoy working with.