

What Is a Listing Agent? Why a Home Sale Hinges on Agent's Expertise

By [Liz Alterman](#) | Sep 14, 2016



If you're getting ready to sell your home, finding a listing agent should be at the top of your to-do list. But just what is a listing agent? You might have a vague mental image of someone who plants a "For Sale" sign on your front lawn and shows potential buyers around your place, but there's plenty more to it.

Here's a primer on what a listing agent does, how the agent makes or breaks your sale, and how to [find a real estate agent](#) in your area.

How listing agents help you price your home

How much is your home worth? That's a hard question to answer. You can get an estimated value by entering your address on [realtor.com](#), but from there you'll want to do some fine-tuning—and that's where a good listing agent can help.

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And the stakes are high: Price your home too low, and you could lose out on a lot of money. Price it too high, however, and the picture isn't pretty either. While it may be tempting to work with an agent who says he can fetch a fortune for your home, overpricing may mean your home languishes on the market for months or even years—making buyers wonder if something's wrong with your home and lowball you anyway.

"Listing agents have many duties and responsibilities, but at the top of the list is to properly price your home," says **Janine Acquafredda**, a Realtor® with House-n-Key Realty.

To do this, a listing agent will analyze the sales prices of comparable homes, or "comps," in your area to see where yours should fit in, and advise you accordingly.

How listing agents help you sell your home

After you determine an asking price, a listing agent should provide you with a comprehensive marketing plan detailing how she'll get your property sold. This plan should include the following:

- Recommendations for home improvements or home staging, if necessary. Yes, these alterations will cost you time and money, but they will improve your chances of a faster sale and higher asking price.
- Taking photos or hiring a photographer who will be able to highlight your home's best features.
- Adding your home to the multiple listing service, where home buyers and their agents can view your property and decide if they'd like to come visit for a closer look.
- Advertising and holding open houses.
- Coordinating showings with prospective buyers.
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How listings agents negotiate with buyers

Once you get an offer on your home, it's the listing agent's job to present it to you and advise if any haggling needs to be done. For instance, if you get an offer way below asking price, your knee-jerk reaction may be to refuse in a huff. But a listing agent might be able to negotiate with the buyers and bring that price up to a decent level—or, if the buyers truly can't budge much, find other ways to sweeten the deal like a faster closing date or waived contingencies. These compromises can actually save you tens of thousands of dollars.

How to choose a listing agent

If you're looking for a listing agent, you can find ones in your area at [realtor.com/agentconnection](https://www.realtor.com/agentconnection), where you'll find such details as their years of experience, number of homes sold, clients' reviews, and more. Don't just move forward with the first agent you meet. Choose at least a few and ask them some questions to assess whether they're right for you.

Here are some questions to ask a prospective listing agent:

- How many homes have you sold in this area, and how long did it take?
- In what price range do you sell most of your homes?
- Do you have advice for me about the condition of my home, and what could be improved to glean a higher sales price?
- What is your marketing plan?
- Can you recommend contractors, photographers, moving companies, etc.?
- Are you a member of the National Association of Realtors®? (Realtors must abide by the group's code of ethics.)
- Is this your full-time job? (A part-time agent is not a problem, but you will want to gauge her availability during off-hours.)
- How often will you touch base with me?
- Are you planning any vacations, and if so, who will back you up?

How much listing agents get paid

Listing agents don't receive a dime unless your home gets sold. If it does, the typical agent commission is 6% of the price of your home (which is typically

split between the listing agent and the buyer's agent). This price may seem substantial, but consider this: For every hour an agent spends with you, he will spend an average of nine hours behind the scenes working on your behalf. In other words, listings agents work hard to earn that commission and get your home sold.

Michele Lerner contributed to this report.