

Selling :: Finding a Listing Agent

Unhappy With Your Real Estate Agent?

Before you consider "firing" your agent, honestly determine why you're dissatisfied.

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If you signed a listing contract but are unhappy with your agent's performance, it may be because:

- **Your home is not selling as quickly as you'd hoped**
It could be that you had unrealistic expectations. While some homes do sell in a few days, many more are up for sale for weeks and often months. This may reflect a tepid market or a glut of homes for sale in a particular neighborhood but, more often than not, it signals overpricing.

"If your house is not selling, be honest with yourself," says Eric Cunliffe, senior vice president and general manager of the RealEstate.com Broker Network. "Did you force your agent into a higher price than they recommended?" Ensure that the competitive market analysis (CMA) that your agent prepared jibes with your asking price.

And while you're being brutally honest, remember those interior and exterior "curb appeal" touch-ups your agent suggested but you were just too busy to finish? "The agent is the expert," says Cunliffe. "Get those little jobs -- like brightening up the front porch or cleaning the windows -- done and out of the way."

- **Your agent is not fulfilling his or her obligations**

A truly negligent agent is certainly the exception, not the rule. When you sign a listing contract, you can expect an agent to perform a number of standard marketing efforts. These include activities such as putting up a "For Sale" sign in your yard, listing your home in the Multiple Listing Service (MLS), holding open houses (for both prospective buyers and other agents), advertising and arranging showings.

If your agent does not properly market your home, complain to the managing broker of the firm he or she represents and request another agent -- assuming your contract is with the firm, not the agent. If it's with the agent and you're insistent on terminating the contract, you may legally have to prove your agent's lack of "due diligence" in carrying out accepted marketing procedures. At this point, you may want to consult a real estate lawyer and, if he or she is a licensed REALTOR®, report the person to the National Association of REALTORS®.

To protect yourself in the future

To protect yourself from getting stuck with a lax agent or someone whose personality doesn't fit your own, your best bet is to sign a listing agreement with a firm, not an individual, and restrict it to a 90-day term. If you and your agent are on the same page, you can always renew your listing agreement. If you're not satisfied, a shorter agreement term gives you an "out" and a little less stress on the path to selling your home.

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