

What should your agent do for you?

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I could give you lists of thousands of items of minutia that REALTORS® handle for their clients but we will stick to the top ten. Remember that not all agents offer the same level of service. Make sure you understand what you are going to receive before you sign a listing agreement. In addition, keep in mind that your agent generally incurs substantial marketing costs up front to list your home, with no guarantee of recouping those costs. We take those risks because of our belief in our ability to sell your home and because we have tools to set your home apart from the pack.

1. Staging Help (interior/exterior) – Your agent should walk through your home’s interior and recommend ways to minimize clutter, maximize space, and create mass appeal to buyers. This may mean asking you to neutralize paint, replace worn carpeting, or take down the 11 x 14 picture of your cat. Never forget the power of curb appeal. Keep your yard mowed, edged, and plant fresh flowers, and lay new mulch. Please don’t be offended, just listen and heed their advice! You hire a REALTOR® for their experience so utilize it. The changes we recommend do work! There are also professional “stagers” that can come and make your home look like a Model for various fees. Keep an open mind and remember the end goal is to sell your home.
2. Photos- Photos are the gateway to your buyers. National Association of REALTORS® now estimates that 80% of buyers used the internet in the search for their new home. The only way to capture those internet shoppers?? Great photos and lots of them! The Austin Multiple Listing Service (which feeds directly to www.AustinHomeSearch.com) allows us to upload a max of 12 pictures. If your agent is a “showcase agent” with REALTOR.com they have the ability to upload up to 25 pictures on that site and can also add even greater customization to your listing on that website. Does your agent have a digital camera with a wide angle lens? Do they do photo editing prior to uploading the photos to MLS? What are they doing to make your pictures fabulous?
3. Virtual Tour- Panoramic pictures, 360 degree views, and movement to boot! Virtual Tours allow you to have a much greater feeling of the layout of the home, the space of the rooms, and provide better depth than a still shot. Most virtual tours will “pan” across or around an entire room to provide the viewer with a sensation of being in the home. Internet buyers expect a virtual tour and they expect it to look professional and smooth. Can your agent do a voice over and personalize your tour with descriptions? Ask them how they make your tour stand out.
4. MLS- Remember the stat from #2? National Association of REALTORS estimates that 80% of buyers used the internet to help them find the home they ultimately purchased. MLS – Multiple Listing Service is the first line of defense to get visibility to your home. Those pretty photos mean nothing if buyers cannot pull them up along with the information on your home. Make sure your agent is a member of MLS and that your listing will be posted there. Savvy buyers are set up on email searches and will receive an email literally the minute that a new listing meeting the criteria hits the market.
5. Websites – Impossible to count the number of different websites that your home’s listing could get posted to. Some of the most pervasive in our market include: REALTOR.com,

AustinHomeSearch.com, Craigslist.com, Trulia.com, Yahoo.com, AOL.com, and MSN.com. Ask your REALTOR® where they post their listings and review the postings for accuracy.

6. Sign – Seemingly insignificant item but this identifies your home as “For Sale” and provides a signal for drive by traffic to take a look and a means for potential buyers to contact your agent for information about your home. Many buyers will “cruise” an area they are interested in, looking for homes for sale so let your sign become their beacon. Make sure your sign is not blocked from view and isn’t leaning over or flopping around. Your agent can also have custom sign “riders” created if you have a unique feature that deserves highlighting like “former builder model,” or “Pool.” The simple yard sign really is a little gem deserves far more credit than it generally receives.
7. Flyers – Flyers are the informational papers that hang on or near the sign in your yard. Slick, shiny, matte, one page, four page booklet, black and white, or color? There are a multitude of options for flyers but they are a must have. Generally it makes sense to have black and white flyers at the curb and color ones inside. Anyone that has true interest in your home will come in and view it so reserve the fancy flyers for them. Ask your agent to leave extra flyers for you so that you can drop them in the outside box when you run low.
8. Lockbox- The lockbox provides a layer of safety to your home. Only licensed real estate agents are provided the capability to access the key to your home from the lockbox. The lockbox also provides your agent with an electronic registry of every person that accesses the lockbox and shows your home. This leads us straight to number 9.
9. Feedback from showing agents- The lockbox capability to time and date stamp all showings of your home also provides the added benefit that your agent knows what other agents have shown your home and can call or email them for feedback about your home. This feedback often proves invaluable in giving insight to ways to improve the likelihood of selling your home.
10. Communication with you - Determine how often you want to receive updates from your agent. Do you want to talk to them every 3 days whether they have anything new to tell you or not? How do you like to communicate? Email, phone, text messaging, instant message? Number 10 can make or break your relationship with your agent. Make sure to agree upon an expected frequency and contact method upon hiring your REALTOR® to eliminate confusion and frustration.