

Why The Internet Isn't Replacing Realtors

While the Internet has had a dramatically profound effect on many industries over the past 10 years (travel agents, we're looking at you), real estate agents are still as important as ever.

Sure, most people – roughly 90% – may start the real estate process online, but the overwhelming majority prefer to use a Realtor when it comes time to move forward with the sale or purchase.

It makes sense. For many people, their home will be the largest monetary investment they make in their lifetime and with so many decisions – and so much paper work – it's intimidating to go it alone.

No, it's not rocket science, but buying or selling a home remains a complex and time consuming process - especially for those already working a full time job and without the time to spend searching and educating themselves.

When it comes to selling your home, some discount brokerages will allow you to list for free, but offer no real assistance beyond the listing. What happens when you run into an inspection issue? Or if the offer you waited 4 months for finally comes through, but with a number of terms and conditions that you don't understand?

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A real estate attorney might be able to help, but they can only typically advise on the black and white stuff; at any given time, the real estate world is swimming in grey.

Several years ago, the owner of forsalebyowner.com ended up listing his own home with a conventional broker, after being unable to sell it on his own. The fix? The broker INCREASED the price \$150k, and put him into a price point the broker was certain would generate more qualified, serious buyers. It worked. Can't make this stuff up.

When it comes to buying a home, many feel the internet has leveled the playing field; find a home on your own, buy a home on your own, end of story.

Sometimes, sure, but usually not so much.

Take Zillow for example; ever wonder why so many homes on that site aren't actually for sale? Ever find what you thought was your dream home, only to realize it's already pending or sold? A number of buyers get completely frustrated searching these websites for homes and for good reason.

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Why aren't these homes available? Easy. Zillow, Trulia and others, make money by charging real estate agents for online advertising space. The more website traffic (buyers) that visit their sites, the more they can charge agents. There are no serious repercussions for listing a home not currently for sale on any of these sites, nor are there any repercussions for not removing an already sold, pending, or expired listing.

On the contrary, when working with a Realtor, the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) board actually fines the listing agent for inaccurate information, not changing the status of a listing in a timely fashion, and for general non-compliance when it comes to listing properties for sale. This creates a more accurate source of information for buyers and reduces frustration for agents trying to show properties for sale.

What does this mean for buyers? Simply put, working with a qualified Realtor saves time, hassle, and frustration; and it prevents finding homes online you'll fall in love with, only to find out it's pending, sold, or not even for sale. It's an added headache you don't need to deal with.

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Rest assured we're not saying these websites are bad (we're all for innovative ideas) they just don't provide the most up-to-date information and can easily result in frustration for buyers. There are many positives to Zillow and Trulia, most notably creating a more user-friendly home search and offering a slew of relevant local real estate information for buyers.

Then, if/when you do find a home, what's next? How do you handle multiple-offer situations, appraisal issues, etc?

Of course, there are a number of other issues that may or may not arise, but unfortunately you don't know until you get into it.

The bottom line is, finding or selling a home is difficult enough. The internet is a revolutionary tool that has provided incredible access to information and listings, but don't only rely on today's most trendy real estate searches and FSBO sites. Make it easy on yourself and call the New Home Experts to make the process as stress-free as possible.