

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN INTERVIEWING LIST AGENTS

- What experience do you have that qualifies you to sell my home?

You will want to find out how long they've been in real estate and whether they are a full-time realtor. (You definitely don't want someone who does this as a side-gig.) How many sales do they typically do in a year? What markets do they specialize in? Have they sold many homes similar to yours (condo v. single v. multifamily, price point, etc.)?

- What is your strategy for pricing your listings?

Agents take many different approaches and there is no one right answer, but you want to know that they have "comps" to back up their predicted market value and a well-thought-out process for choosing the list price that will yield you the best results.

- How will you help me prepare my home to sell?

Unless your home already looks like it is straight out of *Architectural Digest* or *Dwell Magazine*, you are likely going to have to do some things to get it "photo- and showing-ready." (In my ten years of doing real estate, I've had ONE HOME that was perfect as is.) A good agent will guide you with reasonable suggestions (whether that means having it painted, professionally staged, or just doing some decluttering and depersonalizing) to make your home shine. Note that I said "reasonable." There are a lot of houses out there that could benefit from a new kitchen or full landscaping job, and sure those things will make it easier for the agent to sell your house, but do you have the time and resources to get them done? And in the end, will you get your money back?

- How will you market my home?

Ask if they use professional photographers? Will they produce floor plans, videos, 3-D tours? What social media, advertising and agent outreach do they do? Request some samples of their printed marketing materials — brochures, "just listed" postcards, etc.

- How will you handle showings and open houses?

Sure, the first person that walks into your home may want to buy it, but you'll only know that you've gotten the best offer if you have exposed your home to the full market, and that means allowing ample opportunity for people to visit. A good agent will schedule open houses both weekend days, and if customary in your town, host a broker open house a day or two before.

They should also allow for as many private showings as you can accommodate. Too many agents nowadays restrict showings to the open house hours, which can preclude many qualified and interested buyers from being able to see your home.

Also, will the agents be accompanying showings or will they put your home on a lockbox? There are different customs in different markets, so make sure you know what's the norm in yours. In Cambridge and Somerville, your agent should be present at showings. In the suburbs, lockboxes are more usual. Ask so you know what to expect.

- What is your strategy for handling offers?

Will there be an offer review deadline? If multiple offers come in, how will the agent help you evaluate them and negotiate? It's not all about the highest number and you will need your agent to guide you in selecting the best offer overall because the last thing anyone wants is for a deal to fall apart half-way through the process.

- Who will be managing the transaction?

Once you have an accepted offer, someone has to manage it to make sure deadlines are met, the ball is moving forward, and any potential issues that arise are handled. Some agents do this work themselves, while others may have an administrator doing this part — either way is fine but you'll want to know and have confidence that these details are being attended to so that you can get to a successful closing.

- What is your fee?

I've saved this question for last because if you don't have a good agent who is able to address all of the above aspects of selling your home, does it really matter what their fee is?

In competitive markets like ours, there will always be agents and brokerages willing to offer a discounted fee to sell your home because they simply make up the difference in volume. But think about what that means in terms of how much time and attention they will give to your home — probably not much. And is saving 1% on the commission worth it if your sale price is 10% lower than it should be due to poor marketing or lack of access for showings?