

## *Sell It*

There is no question that selling a home is an important event. A home sale represents transition, movement and change. Big money is involved. Households move from the known and comfortable to the unknown and a period of adjustment. There may be job changes, new schools, distance from old friends and the possibility of new ones.

No less important, a home sale by itself can be complex. There will be people looking at your house, documents to sign and issues to be negotiated.

Because a home sale involves an array of both personal and business concerns, it's important to get it done right. You need to carefully prepare your home, understand the market and see what alternatives are realistically available. The old motto "be prepared" is a good guide in such circumstances.

### *What's an acceptable offer?*

The goal of every seller is to have a line of buyers outside the front door, each clutching higher and higher offers. And while this has been known to happen, in most markets there is some balance between the number of buyers and sellers. A number of factors determine whether a buyer's offer is acceptable. They include:

- \* Is the offer at or near the asking price? Is the offer above the asking price?

- \* Has the buyer accepted the asking price or something close? Has the buyer then buried thousands of dollars in discounts and seller costs within tiny clauses and contract additions?

- \* What is the alternative to the buyer's offer? If a home has not attracted an offer in months, then sellers need to determine if a better deal is possible -- recognizing that each month costs are being incurred for mortgage payments, taxes and insurance.

- \* Does the owner have enough time to wait for other offers?

- \* What if no other offers are received?

- \* What if several offers are received? Do you choose the high offer from the purchaser with questionable finances who may not be able to close, or a somewhat lesser offer from a buyer with pre-approved financing?

In each case, owners -- with assistance from REALTORS® -- will need to carefully review offers, consider marketplace options and then determine whether an offer is acceptable.

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### *What is a counter-offer?*

When a home is made available for sale the owner is essentially making an offer to buyers: For a given number of dollars and other terms you can acquire this home. Buyers, in turn, can respond with several options:

- \* Not interested.
- \* Yes, we'll buy on the owner's terms.
- \* We're interested and here's our counter-offer.

A counter-offer is nothing more than a new offer. And just as the buyer had three options in response to the owner's original price and terms, the seller can now choose one of three reactions: accept the offer, decline the offer or make a fresh counter-offer.

Offers and counter-offers reflect the back-and-forth activity of the marketplace. It's an efficient and practical process -- but also one that may contain tricky clauses and hidden costs. The REALTOR® who lists your home can explain the local bargaining process in detail and assist in the actual negotiations.

### *How do you negotiate?*

It's sometimes argued that negotiation must produce one "winner" and one "loser." Others suggest that a "win/win" situation is possible where each side gets something of value.

Real estate bargaining typically involves compromises by both sides. It's not war; it's not winner-take-all; and it's not the time to take personally any comments made by purchasers.

Instead, negotiating should be seen as a natural business process; buyers should be treated with respect; and owners should never lose sight of either their best interests or their baseline transaction requirements. These are the standards unique to each owner, which must be met before the home can be sold.

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