

# How to Choose a Real Estate Agent That's Right for You

By  
Gord Moman REALTOR®

Keller Williams Results Realty - Maple Ridge, B.C. 604-467-0754

*Giving you the best opportunity to maximize your investment and get the results you want out of your relationship with a real estate Agent.*

## **How do you choose the real estate agent that's right for you?**

The purpose of this report is to give you the answer to this very important question. The commitment to choose a real estate agent isn't easy. Choosing the right agent can literally mean the difference between losing thousands of dollars or gaining thousands of dollars. It's that critical. That's why this report has been written – it's to make sure you have the necessary understanding to make this decision.

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**There are 5 main reasons why you should read this report:**

- 1. To ensure your choice of an agent is the right one.**
- 2. To reduce the element of risk associated with the decision you have to make.**
- 3. To give you the confidence to strike up a strong and lasting relationship.**
- 4. To save you from the pain of some high pressure sales people by giving you a step-by-step system that let's you comfortably stay in control of choosing the perfect agent for you.**
- 5. To give you an idea of how agents charge for their services.**

After reading this report I promise you one thing – you'll be able to make a more informed decision on the choice of a real estate agent. It won't guarantee the success of the relationship but it will give you the best possible chance of achieving your goals and objectives for your property...

## **What makes a successful partnership between the client and Realtor?**

Before I go through the process of elimination to find the ideal Realtor for you, it's important at this stage to highlight what makes a successful partnership between you, the

client, and the agent. There are three outcomes that ensure any real estate relationship success:

1. **The Realtor must provide information that is new to you.**
2. **The Realtor must successfully market your home.**
3. **The Realtor must negotiate the best price for your home.**

Few real estate agents agree to be held accountable for outcomes two and three – but this is what you should seek!

### **How do you make a short list of real estate agents?**

The first thing you should do is identify six or seven real estate agents to contact.

There are several ways you can do this:

1. **Local Newspapers:** Look in the “Real Estate” section. You’ll find numerous agents listed. You then need to choose which ones to contact. Look out for these strong indicators:
  - Have they got a sizeable ad? Size doesn’t mean everything but it does suggest the agent has credibility.
  - Look at the ads and see if any of them really appeal to you and make you think, “I should contact this person.” Remember, when people look in these pages an advertiser has about 5 seconds to catch their attention. This means that a company that advertises in these pages must somehow make sure that they are called in preference to their competitors. Something must “jump out” at the reader to get them to act. Do any of the ads “jump out” at you? If they do, then you should add them to your list.
  - Do any of the ads make specific offers to you? Marketing any company isn’t about what the company can do – it’s about what benefits the customer gets from doing business with the company, and what problems are solved. See if each ad talks about you – the customer, or if they talk about themselves. The agents that talk about the customer and the benefits the customer receives are the ones to take note of. Some agents will even offer free advice, free reports or anything that the customer will see as value. Look for these agents.
2. **Flyers delivered through the mail or, better yet, by hand from the realtor:** These people are usually the up and comers in the real estate industry, especially the ones that are out knocking on doors. If they will work this hard to find a customer, imagine how hard they will work for you. They are looking for an opportunity to earn your loyalty and trust. These people usually have more time to devote to exclusively selling your home than the local superstar in the industry. Save their business cards and consider adding them to your list.

- 3. The World Wide Web:** “The Web” is a growing source of information. Searching with words such as “(Your City) Real Estate,” and “(Your City) Property,” will give you a choice of agents to choose from. Go to “Google.com” and do a search of the agents’ names that you collected from the newspaper and from the agents that have knocked on your door. A popular agent should have one or two pages on the internet with their names on them. Once again look for offers, free information and a willingness to help the customer. The downside of the Web is that your searches tend to be very broad –and locality is usually an important consideration when you appoint a Realtor.

### **Making the initial contact.**

Once you’ve decided on the six or seven Realtors to contact you should call or write to each one and ask them to send you information about their company and why you should use their services. Your objective here once you receive the information is to trim your list down to two or three companies with a view to setting up a meeting. The letter below shows the type of information you should give to each Realtor. If you decide to call instead of putting pen to paper you should include the information contained in the letter in your conversation.

Date: <Insert Date>

Brokerage Address: <Insert Realtors Address>

Subject: Real Estate Agent for <Insert Your Name>

Good Morning <Realtors Name>,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am going to put my house on the market <Insert Date. E.g. “in the next few months”>. I am looking into several real estate agents to discover which one is right for me. At this stage, I would be grateful if you could send me details about you and your company, what services you offer, your costs and how you think you could be of value to me.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Best regards,

<Your Name>

**One of three things will then happen if you write to (or phone) each realtor:**

1. **You will receive a call from the agent wanting more information and an attempt to arrange a meeting with you.**
2. **You will receive the details you requested in the mail.**
3. **Neither of the above (yes, some real estate agents will amazingly not respond to a letter inviting business.)**

With response (1) you should give the company the information they request but say that you don't want to meet at this stage. The reason you want companies to respond is to be able to choose two or three companies from their responses to meet with.

***Obviously, if a company doesn't respond don't contact them again.***

You should now have five or six companies to choose from. This is where the real process of elimination starts. How do you choose 2 or 3 Realtors to interview from your list of 5 or 6? You will learn a great deal from the information you receive.

**This is what you need to look for to help you narrow the numbers down:**

Remember, you are looking for a real estate agent to help you market your home. How they market themselves will give you a good indication of their effectiveness. That's why your initial stage in your selection of a Realtor took into account the way each one advertised their business. The chances are that if they sell themselves well in the **local newspaper, with flyers (knocking on doors) and on the internet**, for example, they are likely to do a good job for you.

**Here's what you should look for in the materials that you receive:**

**The Cover Letter:** The cover letter at this stage is what's important to you when narrowing down the number of agents you will meet with. You should base your judgment of each agent purely on the strength of the cover letter. This may surprise you; however the cover letter is crucial in any sales situation – *in fact, it is by far the most important element when selling any business using mail.*

Many companies neglect this fact. Company Brochures and additional information serve only to "tell" the prospect about products and services. The cover letter "sells." **It should state why you should use their services, what benefits you will receive, what proof they have, and what sets them apart from their competitors.** Don't even look at the other materials at this stage. The cover letter should be powerful enough for you to make your decision. **You're looking for a good communicator and salesperson to work for you.**

**These are the important factors to look out for:**

1. **How long did it take to receive the information?** If you receive any response later than five working days after your letter you should dismiss the Realtor

immediately – unless they give a very good reason for not replying sooner. The earlier an agent responds the more efficient, keen and organized that they tend to be.

2. **Have they sent their information (if any) with a cover letter?** If there's no cover letter, then right away strike them off your list. A sales style cover letter that attempts to “differentiate” (show why you should choose them instead of their competitors) is essential in any selling situation. Agents who fail to send cover letters (and it happens a lot) are nowhere near as effective as companies who do.
3. **Have they correctly spelled your name and company details?** This is still a more common fault than you would think. If any details are spelled wrong it shows sloppiness.
4. **Have they answered all your questions?** Being thorough, listening and responding to the customer's needs is essential. If all your questions aren't answered this shows poor business practice as well as an inability to meet the needs of the customer.
5. **Do they talk about the benefits you will receive?** Benefits are what you are buying. This is what's important to you. If a company tells you more about what they do rather than how you benefit from what they do you should think twice about meeting them.
6. **Do they offer any guarantee?** Many real estate agents will never offer any guarantees with their work. Guarantees are a very powerful way of getting customers because a product or service that comes with a strong guarantee gives the buyer confidence and reassurance. You should always look to companies who guarantee their work. This shows conviction and confidence in their work and shows that they are willing to put your interests and fears first.
7. **Do they offer proof of their services with testimonials or case studies?** It's all right saying how good you are, but you need proof and believability. Testimonials and case studies will give you the proof you need. If testimonials or case studies are not included think twice before meeting the agent.
8. **How persuasive is the letter?** If you feel that the contents of the letter are stimulating and you feel interested with what is written, then this is a good indication that this agent should be seen.

By following the simple procedures outlined above you will have narrowed your list down to two or three agents to arrange a meeting with. You should never see more than three agents. It's a waste of your time and each agent will be less enthusiastic if they know you are meeting a long line of people.

## Arranging the Meetings

The next stage is to call or write to each agent to tell them one of two things:

- **You would like to meet with them.** If you prefer to write, ask them to call you to arrange an appointment. It is probably best to have the appointment at your home because (besides the obvious reasons) it saves you time and you will feel more comfortable in your own surroundings. Avoid the agents that insist that you meet them at their office. You are in control at your home and they have more control in their office.
- **Sorry they've been unsuccessful.** It's always courteous to inform a company that they've been unsuccessful. You should even mention why they have been unsuccessful if they ask.

## Deciding on your objectives

Before you meet with the first real estate agent, you need to be clear in your own mind what your objectives are. Here are the three main selling objectives you may have:

1. **To negotiate the best price for your home.** This is the most frequent and important need for most people listing their home with a Realtor. You should see this as your ultimate objective. Any Realtor consultant worth their salt should be able to achieve this for you.
2. **To save on miscellaneous fees.** Your agent should be well prepared to answer every question you have about what kind of fees to expect to pay.
3. **To make your transition as easy as possible.** Selling your home is an important milestone in your life. Your real estate agent should be able to smooth that transition and make it as easy as possible on you and your family.

Now that you know exactly what you want the Realtor to achieve you are ready to compile your short list of questions that will help you decide on the real estate agent that's right for you. Below are fourteen questions to ask to ensure you choose the right real estate agent. Feel free to add more questions to suit your individual situation. You should have a carefully selected number of questions ready for the meeting. These questions will help you establish the most suitable agent. Every agent is different. Each will have a method for doing business with their clients. It's very important that you find out the processes they use from the beginning of the relationship and onwards.

**Here are some examples of questions you need to ask:**

- 1. How do they plan to market your house?** The saying “If you fail to plan you’re planning to fail” is so true. Planning is critical. You must be certain in your mind that the agent you choose sees planning as a very important stage in the process. What process do they use if any? Don’t rely on pure “creativity.” Sure creativity is important, but what you want is a process that is successful – with or without the agent!
- 2. What marketing tools do they use and how many?** Many agents will specialize in the “main” disciplines of marketing – advertising, direct mail, PR and marketing strategy. That’s fine but by doing so they, and ultimately you, will miss out on over another 95 marketing tools – many of which are free.
- 3. How involved are you expected to be?** Your commitment to the relationship is crucial. In most cases you will have to put time into the marketing of your house. Some agents will work quite happily with the minimal input from you. Others will want to work with you to ensure the whole marketing effort is working with you every step of the way. Although time may be a problem, you should make sure you dedicate enough time to work with the agent. The more you learn the better.
- 4. What services do they offer?** Ask the agent to list the services they offer.
- 5. What is included in their service?** Most agents will just charge you a commission percentage for selling your home.
- 6. How do they see their role as your real estate agent?** This question will tell you a lot about the agent. Many are happy to provide services to you without going the extra mile to find out how involved you want to be! You want to find an agent that works for you.
- 7. Do they have different levels of service that they offer to clients?** Most agents will offer just one type of service. Some will offer different levels of service. Options like this give you the opportunity to decide on the most appropriate relationship to suit your needs.
- 8. How often will you meet up?** To accomplish your objectives how often will you need to meet?
- 9. Do you have to commit to a contract?** That’s fine, but make sure you are happy with the terms. Ask what get out clauses you have etc and what length of contract they feel would be needed?
- 10. What do they think sets them apart from their competitors?** This is a great question. It separates the “wheat from the chaff.” Listen carefully to their answers. Look for specific answers not for the mundane things like “Because we offer value, quality and service over and above our competitors.” Replies like that are

so lame. The agent who understands his customers will easily be able to tell you good reasons why you should do business with them.

**11. Do they guarantee results?** If not - why not? Some agents (not many) will guarantee their work either by agreeing to meet certain parameters agreed by you and them or give you a risk free guarantee i.e. work for a month or longer and if you're unhappy return your listing, fees, etc. A combination of both would be best for you.

**12. Do they have the expertise in marketing homes in your area or neighborhood?** This isn't essential, but it's important. If they've worked in the area, they are more likely to know right away what works and what doesn't. Don't get too concerned if the agent hasn't got experience in your area - many marketing tools and strategies are successfully applied across a wide range.

**13. What proof have they got to back up their claims?** Testimonials, case studies and letters of appreciation, will give you a very clear indication of the type of agent you are dealing with. If the person you meet doesn't have any of these with them then you can draw one of two conclusions:

- They don't have any – which would suggest that they aren't as good as they say they are.
- They have them but they haven't brought any with them – which would suggest poor sales strategy (would you want a real estate marketer who has a poor sales strategy to do work for you?) or a lack of preparation.

Those that can show you testimonials and the like are professional, highly organized and usually good agents.

**14. What examples of work have they brought with them?** It's always worth asking each agent to show you some of the work they've done.

### **And Finally...**

In addition to the questions listed above you need to draw two conclusions about the agent during the meeting:

- 1. Is the agent a good listener?** This is very important. Run the other way from anyone who knows exactly what you need before hearing about your objectives.
- 2. Do their ethics and philosophies match yours?** This is essential. To get the best results you must be sure that you are harmonious in these two areas.

***Good Luck!***

My name is **Gord Moman** and I'm a full-time licensed realtor with Keller Williams Results Realty in Maple Ridge, B.C. I am also a founding member of the REAL Pros Group. Phone: 604-467-0754

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