

THE SOPHISTICATED SELLER



*Strategic Selling and Elevated Marketing
in the San Francisco Bay Area*

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The Sophisticated Seller

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FOREWORD

Some stories begin and end in one place. Mine has always been about movement.

I was born in 1961 in Heidelberg, Germany, into a family shaped by resilience and determination. My mother, an ER nurse turned midwife, and my father, a draftsman turned entrepreneur, built their lives on hard work and vision. They were children of World War II, carrying the weight of the past while striving for a future filled with opportunity. My grandfathers, having lived through both world wars, remained steadfast in their commitment to family, diversity, and integrity, values that became my own foundation.

Growing up near Heidelberg with my sister, Iris, we moved constantly 28 times in 25 years always within a 50-mile radius.

Change became our norm, teaching me adaptability and resilience.

Though our childhood often required independence, we never doubted our parents' deep commitment to providing for us. Watching them navigate the highs and

lows of entrepreneurship instilled in me a relentless work ethic and a belief in perseverance.

At 25, I moved to San Francisco, leaving behind my language and everything familiar. Adjusting to a new country with limited English and an unfinished education was challenging, but I embraced the opportunity. I started working as a beauty supply manager, later moving into a regional sales role at Nordstrom, where I learned the power of connection, service, and trust.

Motherhood reshaped my world when Alexandra was born in 1991, followed by Natasha in 1992. Our family moved briefly to El Dorado Hills before returning to Danville, a town that immediately felt like home. As my daughters flourished, I was ready for my next chapter. Encouraged by a friend, I pursued real estate, earning my license in April 1998 and joining Prudential California Real Estate by September.

Over the course of a dynamic real estate career, I have had the privilege of helping people find not just houses, but homes, places where life unfolds and memories are made. Whether guiding families through transitions, assisting corporate relocations, or helping buyers and sellers navigate

the ever-changing market, my passion has always been about people.

If my journey has taught me anything, it's that "home" isn't just a place, it's the life you create within it. And sometimes, the biggest leaps into the unknown lead us exactly where we are meant to be.

MEET YASMINE

Real estate has always been more than a career for me, it's been a journey of connection, transformation, and deep understanding of the people and places that make a house a home. My path to becoming a top-producing real estate agent was not a straight one, but rather a winding road shaped by experience, education, and an unwavering commitment to helping others navigate one of life's biggest decisions.

With a longstanding presence in the San Francisco East Bay real estate market, I've had the privilege of guiding homeowners through some of their most pivotal transitions. I've witnessed shifts in trends, economic cycles, and technological advancements, but one thing has remained constant: the need for trusted guidance when selling a home.

I have built my career not just on market knowledge and strategic execution but on a people-first philosophy, because at the heart of every real estate transaction is a person, a family, a story.

Beyond my work in real estate, I have dedicated myself to education and marketing, always seeking ways to empower clients with the knowledge they

need to make confident decisions. I have written multiple books on home marketing and selling strategies, and I'm passionate about using innovative techniques, professional staging, high-impact digital marketing, and personalized approaches to showcase every home at its absolute best. My team of experts, including a stager, photographer, videographer, and digital marketing specialists, works tirelessly to maximize a property's potential.

This book is the culmination of my decades of experience, designed to equip home sellers with the tools to choose the right agent, craft a strategic marketing plan, and position their homes to achieve the highest value. Selling a home today requires far more than a sign in the yard, it demands a comprehensive, strategic approach tailored to modern buyers.

I have always valued relationships over transactions, and my mission has never changed: to serve, to educate, and to help my clients succeed. Whether you are selling your first home or your fifth, my goal is to ensure this process is seamless, successful, and even enjoyable.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of your journey.

MEET KRISTA

Krista Mashore is the CEO of two multimillion-dollar companies. As one of the Top 1% of REALTORS nationwide, Krista has sold over 2,300 homes since entering the field in 2001. She is known as the Digital Marketing Queen and Yahoo Finances #1 Digital Marketer to watch out for in 2021. As the Broker/Owner of Homes by Krista and CEO of Krista Mashore Coaching, she has put together an unbeatable team whose primary focus and goal is happy clients with highly successful outcomes.

Author of seven bestselling books, Krista now coaches and trains agents and professionals to become experts in the digital marketing space. She has currently made 25 million+ utilizing her proven strategies in one business alone. Krista's ultimate goal is to help clients, and her community in any way she can.

She lives with her family in Contra Costa County in Northern California. One of her favorite pastimes is coaching teens in her community through her movement, Teens Lifting Lives. To learn more about how Krista's Organization Krista Mashore Coaching may be able to help you with your digital marketing

strategies to dominate your profession, please visit www.KristaMashore.com.

If I can answer any questions or offer assistance, please feel free to contact me at 925-998-9747 And be sure to go to www.eastbayrelocations.com or informational videos that are full of valuable information. We can also get you a Free Marketing Analysis and a Home Evaluation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Choosing Your Sophisticated Listing Agent | 1 |
| How to Choose the Right Agent | 3 |
| Here's what else to look for... | 5 |
| Credentials | 5 |
| Why Experience Matters More Than a License | 6 |
| What to Ask About an Agent's Credentials | 7 |
| Experience | 8 |
| Why the Right Experience Matters | 9 |
| But What About Years of Experience? | 10 |
| Real Estate Has Evolved Your Agent | |
| Should Too | 11 |
| Reputation | 12 |
| Why Reputation Matters | 13 |
| How to Research an Agent's Reputation | 14 |
| Does a Great Agent Need a Large | |
| Office or Team? | 15 |
| Outside Resources | 16 |
| Why Does This Matter? | 17 |
| What Happens Without a Strong | |
| Support Team? | 18 |
| The Value of a Well-Connected Listing Agent | 18 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Rapport | 20 |
| Sophisticated Seller Questions to Ask | 22 |
| Sophisticated Digital Marketing Power | 25 |
| Sophisticated Seller Questions to Ask | 30 |
| Sophisticated Negotiating for the Win | 32 |
| The Competitive Negotiator | 33 |
| The Compliant Negotiator | 35 |
| The Collaborative Negotiator | 36 |
| Understanding Your Goals | 42 |
| Showcasing Your Home's Best Features | 42 |
| Compiling Key Home Information | 43 |
| Scheduling and Home Preparation | 44 |
| Communication During the Marketing Stage | 46 |
| During Negotiation | 48 |
| During Escrow | 49 |
| Create Seller Goals and Priorities | 53 |
| Get Clarity | 56 |
| Clarity for Couples | 58 |
| Get Your Priorities Straight | 58 |
| Set Up Your Home to Inspire Offers | 63 |
| Key Areas to Focus On | 65 |
| Breeze Through Inspections | 68 |
| Showing Your Home | 71 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| A Last Word | 74 |
| Oh, and One More Thing | 75 |
| The Lawsuit and What Changed | 78 |
| Big Change #1: No More Public Offers of Buyer Agent Compensation on the MLS | 77 |
| Big Change #2: Buyers Must Sign a Written Agreement with Their Agent | 78 |
| Big Change #3: Sellers Must Pay Buyer Agent Compensation Directly | 79 |
| Should Sellers Still Offer Buyer Agent Compensation? | 80 |
| Navigating the Market: Case-by-Case Decision | 81 |
| Why You Want a Buyer to Have an Agent But is a Buyer's Agent Just as Important? Absolutely! | 83 |
| Myth #1: The ruling happened because agents were getting paid too much. | 84 |
| Myth #2: Sellers will now refuse to help with buyer agent compensation. | 85 |
| Bottom Line: | 86 |

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever read *What to Expect When You're Expecting*? It's a trusted guide for expectant parents, walking them through the ups and downs of pregnancy the emotions, the challenges, the support team they'll rely on, and how to prepare for the best possible outcome. It's designed to eliminate uncertainty and help them embrace the journey with confidence.

Think of this book as your very own *What to Expect When You're Selling*. Because selling a home? It can be just as emotional, exhilarating, nerve-wracking, and ultimately rewarding as bringing a new life into the world. And just like pregnancy, a little preparation and the right team can make all the difference.

Too often, sellers find themselves overwhelmed, frustrated by unexpected challenges, worried about making the wrong decisions, or simply unsure of what to expect next.

But let me reassure you: it doesn't have to be that way. In fact, with the right information and guidance, the process can not only be smooth and stress-free but even exciting and fun, especially when you achieve the best possible outcome.

I wrote this book to empower you, to give you the knowledge, strategies, and confidence to navigate the sale of your home with ease. As a longtime real estate professional and fellow East Bay neighbor, my goal is to see you succeed.

In the first section, I'll help you understand exactly what to look for in a listing agent, how to hire the one who will work relentlessly on your behalf and deliver the level of service you deserve. Whether you're selling a luxury estate or a cozy starter home, you should expect nothing less than exceptional service and results. Later in the book, I'll share insider tips on how you can partner effectively with your agent to maximize your home's appeal, streamline the process, and secure the best possible deal. Selling a home used to be a passive experience, much like the days when expectant fathers paced nervously in waiting rooms while the real work happened behind closed doors. But today? Your involvement, your strategy, your preparation, can make all the difference.

If you have questions at any point, I'm here to help. You can reach me directly at 925-998-9747 or visit www.eastbayrelocations.com for easy-to-watch videos packed with valuable insights. Plus, if you're curious about your home's value, I offer a free marketing analysis and home evaluation to give you a clear picture of your home's potential. This book is my gift to you, along with my very best wishes for a successful, smooth, and rewarding home sale.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yasmin Huster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning of the first name and a stylized, crossed-out "H" in the last name.

CHOOSING YOUR SOPHISTICATED LISTING AGENT

One of the most critical decisions you'll make when selling your home is choosing the right real estate team to list your property. Unfortunately, many sellers simply default to someone they know, a friend, a distant relative, or an acquaintance with a real estate license.

But let's be honest, just because Uncle Harvey is a great guy doesn't mean he's the best person to handle your most valuable asset. Hiring an inexperienced or unqualified agent can cost you tens of thousands of dollars, even if they promise a "family discount" by reducing their commission.

Here's why:

- Marketing matters. A true professional brings a high-powered marketing strategy that maximizes exposure and attracts serious buyers. An inexperienced agent? Not so much.
- Experience saves money. Real estate transactions can be unpredictable, and when things go sideways, you need an expert who knows how to navigate challenges, keep deals on track, and protect your interests. I've spent over 25 years selling homes, and I've seen every kind of misstep imaginable mistakes that cost sellers thousands.

- “Saving” on commissions often costs more in the long run. Many sellers who initially choose a discount broker end up coming back to me months later frustrated because their home didn’t sell or they didn’t get the results they expected.

Think of it this way: If you needed surgery, you wouldn’t just let your next-door neighbor perform the operation because he lends you his lawnmower and offers a discount, right? Of course not! You’d carefully vet your surgeon, checking their credentials, reputation, and expertise.

Your home is one of your largest financial investments, and you need to approach hiring a listing agent with the same level of care and diligence. That means not worrying about hurting Uncle Harvey’s feelings, but instead, focusing on finding the agent who will get you the best possible outcome.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT AGENT

Rather than simply sitting through a rehearsed sales pitch from an agent, treat your first meeting as an interview. Ask tough questions. Dig deep.

The two most critical skills in a listing agent?

- Marketing – A top agent knows how to strategically market your home to attract qualified buyers.
- Negotiation – A skilled negotiator can maximize your sale price, protect your interests, and get you the best possible deal.

If an agent isn't exceptionally strong in both marketing and negotiation, they're doing you a disservice by taking your listing.

Because these areas are so important, I'll be diving deeper into marketing and negotiation strategies in the next chapters. Don't worry, you don't have to become an expert in either, but you do need to understand what to expect from your agent before signing on the dotted line.

When interviewing potential agents, be sure to ask targeted questions about marketing, negotiation, and their specific approach to selling your home.

HERE'S WHAT ELSE TO LOOK FOR...

CREDENTIALS

Anyone can get a real estate license, but having one doesn't necessarily mean an agent knows what they're doing. A license is just the starting point.

Agents who are serious about their profession typically join the National Association of Realtors® (NAR), the industry's leading professional organization. You'll recognize these agents by the Realtor® designation on their business cards. Unlike standard agents, Realtors® are required to:

- Adhere to the NAR Code of Ethics, ensuring integrity and professionalism.
- Complete additional continuing education and pass updated exams every two years.

While all agents must fulfill basic continuing education requirements, these courses don't necessarily teach the best practices for selling homes. And to be frank, no amount of coursework can replace real-world experience.

WHY EXPERIENCE MATTERS MORE THAN A LICENSE

The best agents develop expertise through years of hands-on transactions, learning to anticipate challenges, solve problems before they arise, and strategically maximize a seller's investment.

That said, top professionals in real estate go beyond just experience. Many pursue advanced coursework in areas like:

- Negotiation strategies to secure the best deals.
- Digital marketing and social media to maximize exposure.
- Market trends and financing to understand buyer behavior.

Courses like these often lead to specialized credentials, but what truly matters isn't the number of designations an agent has, it's what they've actually learned and how it benefits you as the seller.

WHAT TO ASK ABOUT AN AGENT'S CREDENTIALS

When interviewing an agent, don't just be impressed by fancy titles, ask:

- What additional training have you completed?
- How does your education and experience translate into better results for me?
- What specific strategies do you use to market and sell homes in today's market?

At the end of the day, a great agent doesn't just collect credentials, they put their knowledge and experience into action to ensure you get the best possible outcome when selling your home.

EXPERIENCE

Let's go back to the surgeon analogy: Would you trust a doctor who has successfully performed dozens of surgeries just like yours? Or would you choose someone who usually works in a completely different specialty? Would you feel confident with a surgeon performing their first-ever procedure, or would you want someone who knows their way around the operating room with precision?

Just like in medicine, real estate expertise matters. Skilled agents typically specialize in certain property types and specific geographic areas, what we call their niche.

In my case, I consider the East Bay Area my true niche. With decades of experience as a relocation specialist, I thrive on exploring, understanding, and gaining deep insight into the diverse cities, towns, and neighborhoods that make up the East Bay. This targeted expertise allows me to market your home effectively ensuring you achieve the best possible results.

WHY THE RIGHT EXPERIENCE MATTERS

A strong listing agent who has successfully marketed and sold homes like yours will have:

- Insider knowledge of your market.
- A tailored strategy that resonates with the right buyers.
- A proven approach to maximize your home's exposure and value.

BUT WHAT ABOUT YEARS OF EXPERIENCE?

Yes, experience is valuable, if it's paired with modern strategies and innovation. The ideal agent combines:

- Wisdom from years of transactions with
- Cutting-edge marketing and negotiation techniques

However, experience alone isn't enough. If an agent has been in the business for decades but still uses outdated methods, it's a major red flag. Choosing an agent who sells homes the same way they did when Reagan was in office? That's like hiring a surgeon who still sterilizes their scalpel over an open flame!

REAL ESTATE HAS EVOLVED, YOUR AGENT SHOULD TOO

The way buyers search for homes has changed dramatically, even in just the last five years. If your “experienced” agent doesn’t know how to:

- Optimize your home’s online profile to stand out on platforms like Zillow,
- Create a high-converting landing page for your property, or
- Run a strategic social media ad campaign to attract the right buyers,

Then you’re at a serious disadvantage. The right agent blends experience, market knowledge, and cutting-edge digital marketing to ensure you get top dollar for your home.

REPUTATION

This is crucial! You want a listing agent who is respected in the community and upholds the highest ethical standards. In fact, why would you ever consider working with someone who isn't ethical, especially when it comes to handling one of your largest financial transactions?

WHY REPUTATION MATTERS

A bad reputation in real estate doesn't just affect the agent, it can directly impact your sale. No other agent, loan officer, escrow officer, or even the pizza delivery guy wants to work with someone known for being dishonest, unresponsive, or difficult.

Think about it:

- If an agent has a reputation for being untrustworthy or hard to deal with, why would another agent bring their highly qualified buyers to them?
- A disorganized or unethical agent can slow down transactions, create unnecessary conflict, or even cost you deals.
- Choosing the wrong agent could mean lost opportunities, unnecessary stress, and potential legal issues.

The good news? Plenty of real estate professionals are highly ethical, respected, and well-connected, you just need to know how to find them.

HOW TO RESEARCH AN AGENT'S REPUTATION

Don't just take an agent's word for it, dig deeper:

- Check online reviews – Look at client feedback on Google, Zillow, Facebook, Realtor.com, and Yelp.
- Verify with official sources – The Better Business Bureau and your state's Department of Real Estate can reveal any complaints or disciplinary actions.
- Ask local Realtors® – If you know other agents in the area, see if they have insight into the agent's reputation.
- Look at their track record – Have they consistently closed deals in your area? Do they have strong negotiation results?

DOES A GREAT AGENT NEED A LARGE OFFICE OR TEAM?

Not necessarily. Some of the best agents operate independently or with virtual teams that are highly skilled and efficient. What does matter is whether they:

- Invest in a strong support system to ensure smooth transactions.
- Have specialized team members (photographers, marketing experts, transaction coordinators) to enhance your home's presentation.
- Provide clear communication on who you'll be working with, what they handle, and how often you'll hear from them.

A top-tier listing agent isn't just someone with a license, they're someone with a proven reputation, a trusted network, and a commitment to excellence.

OUTSIDE RESOURCES

Every real estate transaction requires the expertise of outside professionals, from home inspectors, escrow officers, and loan officers to insurance agents, stagers, and contractors.

Experienced Realtors® don't just randomly pick people for these roles. Instead, they carefully vet and build a trusted team of professionals they work with consistently. These are specialists your agent calls for advice and services, ensuring your transaction runs smoothly.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Because the right team can make or break a deal. When your agent has a strong network of reliable professionals, it means:

- Fewer headaches for you.
- Smoother transactions, with fewer delays.
- Stronger negotiation leverage, because issues can be resolved quickly.

Even if a service is required on the buyer's side, your listing agent can help keep the deal on track by recommending trusted professionals to the buyer's agent.

WHAT HAPPENS WITHOUT A STRONG SUPPORT TEAM?

I've seen firsthand how the wrong professionals can completely derail a transaction:

- An inept escrow officer miscalculates funds, delaying or disrupting the closing.
- An insurance agent fails to secure the correct policy in time, pushing back escrow deadlines.
- A buyer requests repairs within a tight contingency period, but without a trusted contractor on call, you're left scrambling, risking unnecessary delays or a failed deal.

THE VALUE OF A WELL CONNECTED LISTING AGENT

A great agent doesn't just market your home, they solve problems before they happen. Having trusted professionals on speed dial ensures that when something needs to be fixed, verified, or expedited, it gets done fast and correctly, helping your sale move forward seamlessly.

When choosing a listing agent, ask: Who are your go-to professionals, and how do they support your transactions? The answer could make all the difference.

RAPPORT

The word “rapport” comes from French, so, of course, it sounds a little fancy! But at its core, it simply means feeling aligned with someone. It’s more than just getting along, it’s about having a connection, a sense that they “get” you. Even if you come from different backgrounds or cultures, the right person will speak your language and understand your priorities.

I know, this might sound a little like dating advice. But here’s why it matters: You’re entrusting your home, one of your most valuable and emotionally significant assets, to someone you may not have met before. That’s a big deal.

Your reasons for selling your home are deeply personal (we’ll dive into this in a later chapter). The last thing you need is an agent who puts their own agenda ahead of yours. You want someone who will:

- Listen to your goals and take them seriously.
- Offer expert guidance without steamrolling your decisions.
- Have your best interests at heart at every stage of the sale.

Your agent doesn’t have to become your best friend, but they do need to be someone you trust, someone who respects your vision and works tirelessly to help you achieve it.

SOPHISTICATED SELLER QUESTIONS TO ASK

Here are some important questions you can use to vet your listing agent.

I recommend to keep this list along with other questions you have right next to you during your first appointment, so you get the information you need to feel confident about your decision.

Credentials:

1. Are you a Realtor®? What resources from the NAR do you use?
2. What further courses have you taken in real estate? What did you learn from them?

Experience:

1. How much experience do you have selling homes in the East Bay? Can you give me some recent examples?
2. I understand you work in the broader East Bay Area. How will you bring value in my specific neighborhood?

Or

I understand you are the neighborhood specialist.

How will you reach a broader clientele when listing my home?

1. How would you say real estate has changed over the last several years? Have you kept up with the latest trends in marketing to buyers online? What specifically do you do in that arena?

Reputation: Though you can't really ask them directly what their reputation in the community is, you can ask:

1. Are you involved in the community and any professional organizations?
2. What do you like your clients and counterparts to say or think about you? What do you think you are known for as an agent?

Overall Team:

1. Who else is on your team? What are their skills and background?
2. What specifically do you handle versus what members of your team handle?
3. How often will I be interacting with them? With you?

Savvy Marketing in Today's World

The world has changed drastically and the way we shop, communicate, and get our news, information and entertainment has significantly changed. Especially in the last five years, things like online shopping and social media have exploded. With technology, we can pay bills and order our lattes with our smart phones. We can take a video of Junior taking his first steps and shoot it to Grandma thousands of miles away in seconds. We can find out where the nearest gas station is or how high Mt. Everest is (29,029 feet!) with a two second Google search. Yet, despite our fantastic advances in technology, the real estate industry has lagged way behind and most agents still do their jobs the same way they did in the '80's, *especially* when it comes to marketing.

Why should this matter to you? Because basic traditional marketing will *not* get you the best result. Other agents may be able to get your house sold but it will not happen as quickly as it could, and you won't get the price and most favorable terms you could get

Why? Because *basic traditional marketing does not reach as many potential, qualified buyers*. Digital marketing in real estate demands precision, reach, and innovation.

As a homeowner, while you need not be a tech expert, your chosen agent must exhibit mastery in leveraging digital platforms to amplify your home's presence. Superficial social media posts to existing followers are insufficient. True digital marketing employs targeted campaigns that engage untapped audiences, transforming limited exposure into expansive visibility. Imagine the stark contrast: a handful of views versus thousands of engaged prospects. According to NAR, 67% of buyers tour homes they discover online. Thus, an agent's digital strategy can be the linchpin between mediocrity and market dominance, akin to the difference between singing in the shower and captivating millions at the Super Bowl halftime show.

SOPHISTICATED DIGITAL MARKETING POWER

The internet and social media are powerful tools that can ensure the successful sale of your home, maximize your profit, and attract a wide audience of potential buyers with the best terms. While the technicalities of this type of marketing can be complex, what matters most is how your listing agent leverages these tools for you.

Effective marketing on social media can reach thousands of prospective buyers, giving your home a competitive edge. Great marketing starts before your home even hits the market with “Coming Soon” signs and online sneak previews.

Exceptional agents use paid social media advertising to generate thousands of views, post virtual property tours, and reach a broad audience, including millennials through platforms like Instagram.

Consistent updates on real estate sites keep your home visible, while targeted marketing focuses on buyers most likely to pay top dollar. Creative campaigns may include contests and giveaways that promote your home’s virtual tour, supported by SEO strategies to ensure high visibility through relevant keywords.

In addition to Facebook, platforms like YouTube (the second largest search engine globally) and Instagram play crucial roles in marketing your home through well-crafted videos and captions. Advanced software helps track buyer behavior, enabling agents to continuously market to interested parties.

A great agent monitors their online campaigns closely, adjusting strategies based on performance and promptly following up on leads. Data analysis, including home sales, market conditions, and buyer interest, informs pricing and marketing decisions. During your initial interview, ask to see examples of an agent's past listings and social media analytics to ensure they have the expertise needed to market your home effectively.

Elevating Real Estate Marketing: What Exceptional Agents Do Differently

Traditional real estate marketing often includes listing your property on the MLS, printing flyers, sending mass emails, placing signs, posting photos online, and holding open houses. But great agents go far beyond the basics. They implement standout, innovative strategies to ensure your home captures attention and sells at the best price.

MLS Listings Done Right

Exceptional agents don't just list your home on the MLS, they ensure it appears on all major real estate platforms like Zillow, Redfin, Realtor.com, and Trulia. They leverage backend tools to enhance visibility, keep your property in prime positions, and use virtual video tours instead of static photos. Their listings highlight what makes your home unique, tailored to attract the right buyers.

Professional Photography and Videography

Top agents hire professional photographers and videographers to showcase your home's best features with perfect lighting, angles, and editing. They might include twilight shots and drone footage for added appeal. With video content generating 12 times more shares on social media than text or images, these agents ensure your property receives maximum exposure through organic reach and targeted ads.

Interactive Virtual Tours

Using cutting-edge technology like Matterport, agents create immersive virtual tours that let buyers explore your home from anywhere. These interactive experiences keep viewers engaged longer and are easily shared across social media, functioning as 24/7 open houses.

High-Quality Printed Materials

Forget generic flyers. Great agents produce premium brochures with links to virtual tours and property websites, optimized for mobile viewing since most buyers search via smartphones. Personalized mailers with QR codes drive traffic to your listing, while “Just Listed” flyers keep neighbors informed, because locals often know potential buyers.

Strong Real Estate Community Engagement

Reputable agents maintain strong relationships with top buyer’s agents, both locally and regionally. They send targeted emails with links to your property’s brochure and website, followed by personal outreach.

Feedback from showings is quickly gathered to refine marketing efforts.

Dedicated Property Website

Your home deserves more than a basic webpage. Great agents create dedicated sites featuring virtual tours, detailed property information, area maps, amenities, school data, and mortgage calculators. Neighborhood-specific content, such as local events, dining spots, and market trends, attracts buyers who are genuinely interested in your community.

Neighborhood Funnels for Targeted Marketing

Agents use digital funnels to attract and track potential buyers months in advance. By offering comprehensive neighborhood information, they ensure buyers are well-informed and confident when making offers, avoiding surprises that could derail deals.

Why It Matters

Exceptional marketing takes time, money, and continuous learning. But it ensures your home stands out, attracts qualified buyers, and sells faster at the best price. If your agent isn't delivering this level of service, you're leaving money on the table.

SOPHISTICATED SELLER QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. Specifically, what will you do to market this property?
2. What potential buyers would you target for my property and why? How specifically will you market to them?
3. What do you think makes my home most attractive to buyers and how will you feature it?
4. On what sites will my home be listed? How often do you update these listings?
5. What kinds of efforts will you make to engage the real estate community about my property?
6. How will you engage my neighborhood?

7. What will my home's website look like? Who will take photos and videos?
8. What kind of social media ad campaigns will you run? How often will you post on various sites? How will you use their analytics?
9. What kind of campaign do you run before the property officially goes on the market?
10. How do you specifically target buyers who are looking at properties similar to mine?

SOPHISTICATED NEGOTIATING FOR THE WIN

Negotiation often gets a bad reputation and is frequently misunderstood. Many people view it as a competitive scramble, like a family-style dinner where everyone rushes to grab their share before it's gone. Others see negotiating as impolite , if someone asks for something, you either agree or decline, without any back-and-forth.

Both of these views are outdated. Effective negotiation is about creating a “win-win” outcome, where all parties achieve what they truly need, even if they don't get everything they want. It's built on thoughtful compromise, give-and-take, and is the key to securing the best price and most favorable terms for your home, quickly and efficiently.

Like marketing, you don't need to become a negotiation expert yourself. However, it's essential to understand the negotiation skills of the agents you're considering. Knowing their negotiation style and the training they've received can make all the difference. Let's explore the different negotiation styles to help you make an informed decision.

THE COMPETITIVE NEGOTIATOR

A “winner-takes-all” negotiator operates with an outdated mindset. Much like the hard-sell tactics of decades past, this approach is often ineffective in today’s real estate market. Competitive negotiators, driven by ego, pride themselves on being cutthroat and unyielding. While they may close deals, it often comes at a high cost to their clients, delays, unfavorable terms, and unnecessary stress.

You can spot a competitive negotiator by their need to always be right. They are inflexible, failing to distinguish between critical issues and minor details. Their tactics often include bullying, such as threatening to cancel deals or imposing unrealistic deadlines. Rather than expediting the process, this behavior typically results in lost opportunities and added expenses for their clients.

While these agents may charm their clients, they often treat other parties poorly, exhibiting unprofessional behavior, short tempers, and even profanity. Their need to dominate and be “right” creates friction, leading to lost deals and heightened stress.

Why is this approach ineffective? Other agents distrust

competitive negotiators, avoid working with them, and anticipate a hostile transaction.

Even when deals are completed, the process is often contentious and leaves everyone dissatisfied. This style of negotiation is simply bad business, and it won't get you the results you deserve.

THE COMPLIANT NEGOTIATOR

The compliant negotiator is the opposite of the competitive negotiator. These individuals often fear confrontation and disagreement, driven by a need to be liked, which can lead them to yield too easily. While they may be kind and pleasant, they are not the advocate you need in your corner.

Imagine a surgical nurse who is afraid of blood, certainly not the person you'd want assisting in your surgery. In an operating room, blood is an expected part of the process, not something to avoid. A skilled nurse remains calm, manages the situation efficiently, and focuses on ensuring the best outcome. Similarly, negotiation is an inherent part of every real estate transaction. It's rare for a buyer to accept every term without negotiation, and an agent who consistently gives in is not protecting your best interests.

A compliant agent often warns clients to concede, fearing the loss of the deal. But remember: if a buyer truly wants your property, they will negotiate. I always remind my clients that if a buyer walks away after our counteroffer, they likely would have walked away later in the process, wasting our valuable time.

So, if neither the aggressive bully nor the overly compliant “scaredy-cat” is the right choice, what kind of negotiator do you need?

THE COLLABORATIVE NEGOTIATOR

Like a calm surgical nurse, a collaborative negotiator is prepared and ready for every aspect of negotiation. At its core, negotiation is communication, and a skilled negotiator listens actively and asks thoughtful questions to truly understand all parties involved in the transaction.

From the start, they work with you to set clear goals for selling your home, helping you prioritize your needs and identify potential areas for compromise before your home even hits the market. They provide realistic expectations, guiding you with honesty rather than empty promises.

When offers come in, a collaborative negotiator takes the time to understand each buyer's motivations and priorities by engaging with the buyer's agent and conducting thorough research. If conflicts arise between your desires and the buyer's requests, they collaborate to develop creative solutions that honor your top priorities while finding common ground on smaller issues to keep the deal on track.

A collaborative negotiator remains calm and composed, even when faced with unreasonable demands or heightened emotions from the other side. Their focus stays on achieving the best possible outcome for you without letting ego or the need to "win" jeopardize the transaction.

While some may perceive this approach as passive, it is, in fact, one of the most effective strategies. Leading institutions like Harvard teach collaborative negotiation in their advanced courses, emphasizing its strength in achieving favorable results.

Key skills of a collaborative negotiator include effective communication, active listening, rapport building, creative problem-solving, assertiveness, and ethical persuasion. Armed with these abilities, a collaborative agent is well-positioned to secure the best possible outcome for your home sale.

Sophisticated Seller Questions to Ask

While your agent handles the direct negotiations, you still have an important role to play. Even if you're a skilled negotiator yourself, direct communication with the buyer or their agent can create confusion or jeopardize the transaction. Trust your agent to represent your best interests, and focus on supporting them. Your role includes:

Remember Your Priorities:

In the next chapter, we'll explore how to identify your top priorities for selling your home. During negotiations, you'll face many decisions, some significant, some minor. It's easy to get caught up in every detail, but don't lose sight of your ultimate goal. Keep your priorities clear to navigate any challenges that arise without losing focus.

Stay Calm and Think It Through:

Selling your home is emotional, but the best decisions come from a calm mindset. You may feel frustrated if a buyer requests high rent for your post-close stay or upset if they plan to remove beloved features like your

pool or lemon trees. Take a deep breath. Respond thoughtfully rather than reacting impulsively. If needed, give yourself time to process before making decisions.

Listen and Ask Questions:

Your agent is there to guide you, listen to their advice. If you disagree or need clarity, ask questions. Understand their reasoning, explore alternatives, and share your own ideas. Ask what might happen if you reject a compromise. Ultimately, the decisions are yours, but ensure you have all the information needed to make the right choice.

Be Clear:

Clear communication with your agent is essential. Share your concerns and preferences openly. When you make a decision, ensure it's one you feel confident honoring. If you're selling as a couple, present a united front to avoid mixed signals. Give your agent clear instructions, and be open to their professional advice, especially if they suggest an alternative approach that could benefit you.

Unfortunately, most people don't find out what their agent's negotiating style is until they're in the middle of negotiations! Asking a few questions and really paying attention to how they interact with you will help.

1. What negotiations training and courses have you taken? What credentials do you hold in them? What did you learn from them?
2. How would you characterize yourself as a negotiator? What is your best skill in negotiating?
3. What do you think are the most important aspects of any negotiation?
4. What part will I play in negotiations and how will we communicate during this stage?

Savvy Communication is Key

When choosing a potential listing agent, strong communication is essential. Too often, traditional agents secure your signature and then vanish until they have an offer, or an explanation for why they don't. In today's fast-paced world, that is unacceptable. You deserve consistent updates and open lines of communication.

You need to stay informed about marketing efforts, buyer feedback, and any developments during the sales process. From the outset, your agent should provide clear and regular communication.

A great agent will explain market conditions and their impact on your sale, identify target buyers, and outline their marketing strategy. They will offer honest feedback on pricing and expectations rather than simply telling you what you want to hear.

If multiple agents suggest your home is overpriced, be cautious of the one who says otherwise just to secure your listing. Overpricing often leads to extended market time and eventual price reductions. For example, a home initially listed at \$1,749,000 was reduced to \$1,699,000 after three weeks, eventually leading to a withdrawal from the market.

Later, another team sold it in nine days for \$1,695,000, the price it should have been listed at from the start.

Choose an agent who is frank, honest, and treats you as a valued partner. Effective communication must continue throughout the entire selling process, ensuring your questions are answered and your interests are prioritized.

Starting Off on the Right Foot

From the very beginning, your listing agent and their team should maintain consistent communication, not to overwhelm you, but to keep you informed about what's happening and when.

The first step? Understanding how you prefer to connect. Do you prefer phone calls, texts, or emails? What times of day work best? Your agent should also clarify their availability and provide backup contacts for pressing questions. I always ensure my clients have direct access to every key team member they'll be interacting with.

At the start of the process, your agent should be actively asking questions and providing clear guidance, including:

UNDERSTANDING YOUR GOALS

Your agent should take the time to truly listen and understand your needs from this sale. I explore this in more depth in the next section, but at the core, a good agent will ask thoughtful questions and tailor their marketing and negotiation strategies accordingly. If an agent breezes past this step, it's a red flag, they may

be applying a one-size-fits-all approach, which won't maximize your results.

SHOWCASING YOUR HOME'S BEST FEATURES

Who knows your home better than you? Your agent should ask about what you love most about the property, any upgrades you've made, and what makes living there special. A great listing agent (or their marketing specialist) will go beyond the basics, gathering insights on neighborhood perks, great neighbors, local hotspots, and nearby amenities. While they'll have area statistics on hand, your personal perspective adds invaluable depth to the marketing strategy.

COMPILING KEY HOME INFORMATION

This is the logistical part, but it's essential. I provide my clients with a structured "Seller's Homework" packet that gathers everything needed, from alarm codes and preferred showing instructions to legally required disclosures.

In California (and many other states), disclosure requirements are extensive. Your agent should not only walk you through these requirements but also simplify the process. For instance, I provide an easy-to-use online form for disclosures and a comprehensive checklist covering everything from homeowners' associations to roof age.

A crucial rule: **over-disclosure is always better than under-disclosure** to protect against legal issues. Whether it's a golf course location, heavy street traffic, an HOA fee increase, or even a minor repair from years ago, if you know about it, disclose it.

I've taken extensive training to guide my clients through this process, ensuring they're fully protected from potential litigation.

SCHEDULING AND HOME PREPARATION

Your agent's team should coordinate all key appointments, on your schedule, not just theirs. This includes:

- **Photography & Videography:** You should receive a checklist on how to prepare your

home for professional photos and videos.

- **Staging Consultation:** I always arrange for a stager to provide recommendations on how to best highlight your home's features.
- **Lawn Sign & Lockbox Setup:** Your input matters. The agent should discuss sign placement and explain lockbox access to ensure you feel comfortable with the process. I also provide guidance on keeping valuables secure during showings.
- **Pre-Market Home Preparation:** Before listing, a good agent will review any recommended repairs or improvements with you. If necessary, they should provide vetted vendor recommendations and help you explore alternative solutions to fit your needs.

Your home's presentation, disclosures, and marketing strategy should never be left to chance. The right agent will have a clear plan, an attentive team, and a commitment to making the process seamless and stress-free for you.

COMMUNICATION DURING THE MARKETING STAGE

Unfortunately, this is the stage when many listing agents go silent. While they may be working behind the scenes, they often fail to keep sellers informed. A top-tier listing agent, however, will keep you engaged every step of the way.

From the start, they should outline their marketing strategy in detail, explaining where and when various marketing efforts will launch. They should provide you with copies of all printed and digital marketing materials so you can share them. Additionally, they should guide you on how to effectively promote your home on social media and even create emails you can forward to friends and family.

Once marketing is underway, you should receive regular updates, at least weekly. I personally send a comprehensive marketing report every week, along with updates on key market changes, such as mortgage interest rate fluctuations, absorption rates, and sales trends that may impact the sale of your home.

Your agent should also collect and share feedback from buyers' agents after showings. Waiting months to learn that all buyers think the carpet needs replacing is a costly mistake. I use synchronized lockboxes that notify us in real time when a home is shown. Within 24 hours, someone on our team contacts the buyer's

agent for feedback. We then relay this information to our clients in twice-weekly reports and discuss any necessary adjustments.

Most importantly, a great listing agent continuously tracks and analyzes marketing performance, adjusting strategies as needed. If a social media ad isn't generating leads, it should be revised. If the home is getting frequent showings but no offers, pricing or presentation may need reevaluation. If the brochure isn't attracting inquiries, it must be refined. A proactive agent stays ahead of these trends and keeps you fully informed throughout the process.

DURING NEGOTIATION

This is the stage where you should have the most one-on-one time with your agent. While their team may assist with various aspects of the transaction, negotiation is a critical moment that should be handled directly by your listing agent, never delegated to an inexperienced junior associate.

Your agent should provide insights into the buyer's motivations, key priorities, and any factors that could influence their decision. Additionally, they should have knowledge of the buyer's agent, understanding their

negotiation style, communication habits, and track record in past transactions.

As offers come in, your agent should offer clear, data-driven feedback on their viability. They should also identify areas for potential counteroffers to bring the terms closer to your goals. Negotiation should be a collaborative process, not a rigid, one-sided approach. While I bring deep expertise in real estate and market dynamics, I recognize that my clients are intelligent decision-makers. My role is to present creative solutions and strategies while ensuring their input remains central throughout this phase.

DURING ESCROW

For most sellers, this is the most frustrating stage, it's a waiting game. You wait for contingencies to clear, for the title company to complete its report, and for the lender to release funding so the title can be recorded. And during this stage, plenty of unexpected issues can arise.

I don't believe my clients need to hear about every minor hiccup in this phase, but they should be informed immediately if anything threatens to derail the transaction. Some agents prefer to "wait and see"

if problems resolve themselves, often because they're hesitant to deliver bad news. But a good listing agent respects their clients enough to be upfront about potential roadblocks that could jeopardize the deal or require significant adjustments.

My first broker taught me that an agent's job is to be a problem solver, because, in every transaction, issues will arise. With so many parties involved in reaching a successful close, a great agent stays on top of every step rather than assuming everything is going smoothly. Constant communication with lenders, title officers, inspectors, and other key players is essential to keeping the process on track.

For example, if a roof inspection reveals unexpected issues, you should know as soon as possible to decide on your next steps. If it appears that a buyer may not qualify for financing, your agent should tell you right away and start securing backup offers. Ideally, they asked the right questions before escrow to prevent these surprises, but sometimes things slip through the cracks, whether it's a missed verification, an overlooked detail, or a lender who never truly intended to fund the loan. The last thing you want is to reach the end of the loan contingency period only to realize the deal is falling apart.

A great agent doesn't simply hand you off to the escrow officer and step back. Instead, they stay actively involved, ensuring that all documentation is submitted correctly and on time, so the transaction moves as smoothly as possible.

Sophisticated Seller Questions to Ask

Selecting the right real estate agent is crucial, and communication is key. The last thing you want is to find yourself months into the process, struggling to track down your agent for updates. To ensure you stay informed and involved, here are essential questions to ask when interviewing potential agents:

- 1. How often will you communicate with me?**
Who on your team will be my main point of contact during each phase?
- 2. What's the best way to reach you for urgent questions?** If you're unavailable, who should I contact?
- 3. Do you provide checklists or consultations to help me prepare my home for the market?**
- 4. How frequently will I receive updates on your marketing efforts and their results?**
What level of detail will you provide?

- 5. How will I receive feedback from potential buyers and their agents?** How often will you share insights?
- 6. How will we stay connected during negotiations?**
- 7. How hands-on is your team during the contingency period?** How do you coordinate with escrow and the title company, and how often will you provide updates?

By asking these questions, you can ensure you're working with an agent who keeps you informed, involved, and confident throughout the home-selling process.

CREATE SELLER GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Selling a home is rarely a spur-of-the-moment decision. Most sellers have been considering it for some time and often have multiple motivations behind their decision. (This is true for buyers as well, they typically start searching online 3-6 months before they're ready to make an offer. That's why it's crucial for your agent to know how to capture these early-stage buyers.) For couples, motivations can sometimes differ or even conflict.

To achieve the best possible outcome, the one that leaves you happiest in the end, it's essential to clearly define your reasons for selling and your specific goals. Without this clarity, even the most skilled Realtor® will struggle to craft the best strategy for you.

Why does this matter? Because your agent's approach, both in marketing and negotiation, should be tailored to your individual priorities. While every listing receives a baseline level of service, the best agents customize their strategies based on your needs.

For example, consider two sellers with identical homes in the same neighborhood:

- One needs to relocate quickly to care for a sick parent across the country. They want a good price but prioritize a fast sale.

- The other isn't in a rush and wants to maximize their profit to afford an upgrade.

A skilled listing agent will handle these scenarios differently. The second seller might be advised to make minor renovations or landscaping improvements, while the first seller might be encouraged to move out immediately for a smoother, faster transaction. Pricing strategies will also differ, one may test a slightly higher price, while the other may aim for a competitive, slightly below-market price to attract quick offers.

Every real estate transaction involves countless details that can be adjusted based on your specific needs, escrow length, cash vs. financing, pre-sale renovations, contingencies, rent-back options, deposit size, and more. If you aren't crystal clear on your priorities from the start, your agent won't be able to develop the most effective strategy.

Additionally, selling a home requires making numerous decisions along the way. By defining your goals upfront, you'll find it much easier, and far less stressful, to navigate the process and make confident choices during negotiations.

GET CLARITY

Take some time to write down everything that matters to you in the sale of your home. Don't hold back, list everything that comes to mind. Then, for each item, ask yourself, *Why?*

For example, if you write, *Sell the house for \$650,000*, dig deeper. Why that number? Is it because your neighbor sold for that amount? Is it what you need to pay off your mortgage and afford the down payment on your next home? Is it tied to your retirement plans? Understanding *why* each goal is important will help you make more informed decisions.

Also, keep in mind that what truly matters is not just the sale price, but how much you *net* from the sale. Just because you need or want a certain amount doesn't mean your home is worth that much. Ultimately, your home's value is determined by what a buyer is willing to pay in the current market.

Now, consider what you *don't* want. Are there specific showing times you want to avoid? Repairs you prefer not to make? Maybe you're dreading the thought of decluttering your overstuffed garage. List out these concerns and reflect on why they matter to you. However, remember that any restrictions you place,

whether on showings, repairs, or staging, can limit the number of interested buyers and offers.

Before making final decisions, discuss your priorities and concerns with your Realtor®. They can help you understand the impact of your choices and guide you toward the best strategy for a successful sale.

CLARITY FOR COUPLES

When I work with sellers who are a couple, I often recommend that each person creates their own separate list. Why? Because one partner may hesitate to contradict the other or may not feel completely comfortable expressing their true preferences. Doing this exercise individually allows each person more freedom to be open and honest.

Once you've each made your lists, sit down together and compare them. Discuss each item, noting the goals and desires you share. You may surprise each other with new ideas or possibilities, or you might discover areas where your priorities differ. If conflicts arise, it's best to address them now rather than later. Resolving differences early will help prevent stress down the road.

Once you bring your agent on board, presenting a united front will ensure they clearly understand your shared goals and expectations throughout the sales process.

GET YOUR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT

In life, we rarely get everything we want, and selling your home is no different. Sometimes, everything falls into place perfectly, but just in case it doesn't, it's essential to know where you're willing to compromise and where you aren't.

For example, you may have decided you don't want to do any renovations before selling. However, if feedback from potential buyers indicates that certain features, like bold-colored walls, are off-putting, you may need to reconsider. If getting top dollar in a reasonable timeframe is your goal, a simple change like repainting could make a significant difference. I provide my clients with a clear analysis of what updates will maximize their sale price. For instance, if repainting costs \$4,000 but could increase your home's value by \$20,000, that's an investment worth considering. If cash flow is an issue, there are excellent programs available to help, and your agent should guide you to the best options. Our office offers this service, and it

has helped sellers achieve significantly higher returns with strategic improvements.

Here's a real example: A couple listed their home with an agent who didn't advise them on necessary repairs or improvements. The home sat on the market, eventually dropping to \$1,599,000, but still didn't sell. After three months, they took it off the market. Two months later, they listed with my team.

We recommended a few key updates, professionally staged the home, and relisted it at the original price. Within ten days, we secured an offer above asking and closed quickly. This is the kind of strategic advice that makes a real difference. Because their previous agent failed to guide them, they not only struggled to sell but also incurred extra mortgage, tax, and utility costs during that time.

Now, back to your priorities. Take your list of goals and rank them in order of importance. If you could only achieve one, which would it be? What about three? Keep going until you have a clear hierarchy from "most important" to "least important."

Once your list is complete, share it with your agent. (I ask for my clients' lists in our first meeting.) A great agent will provide feedback, offer suggestions, and develop a strategy to help you achieve as much of

your list as possible. They'll also be honest if some of your expectations aren't realistic, explaining why and helping you adjust accordingly.

This is also the time to separate emotion from facts. You may want to keep your daughter's room exactly as she left it before college, but if her dramatic Goth décor is deterring buyers, it's worth reconsidering. Similarly, you might expect to get as much for your home as your neighbor did last year, but is that based on market data or just pride? A fair comparison would require identical market conditions, lot sizes, locations, and upgrades.

Many sellers expect top dollar for their home while wanting the best deal when they buy, and I completely understand! I've felt the same way when selling my own home. But listing price must be based on market realities, not emotions. While thoughtful upgrades can add value, not all investments yield a high return. For example, a custom mantel you love might not hold the same value for buyers. Pricing should be driven by current market trends, not just the money and effort you've invested in your home.

This is where trusting your agent is key. If you've chosen an experienced, knowledgeable agent, rely on their pricing and marketing recommendations. A real

estate license and a business card don't automatically make someone an expert, so make sure your agent backs up their strategy with solid market data.

Once your home is on the market, and especially during negotiations, refer to your priority list. It will help you stay focused, avoid second-guessing, and make decisions with confidence. This approach will reduce stress and increase the likelihood of achieving your goals.

To get started, ask yourself these key questions when creating your list of wants and needs, then go beyond them. The clearer you are, the smoother the process will be.

Sophisticated Seller Questions to Ask

- 1. Why now?** Is this a “want to sell” or a “need to sell” situation?
- 2. What is our ideal timeline?** How quickly do we want, and need, to sell?
- 3. When do we want to move?** Are we open to vacating before listing, or would we prefer to rent back from the buyer if the home sells quickly?

4. **What is our financial goal?** How much do we aim to net from the sale, and why?
5. **When will we need access to the proceeds?**
6. **What level of preparation are we comfortable with?** How much time, money, and effort are we willing to invest in pre-sale improvements or buyer-requested repairs?
7. **Are we planning to buy another home?** If so, will it be local or out of the area? Do we need assistance in finding a qualified buyer's agent?

Savvy Seller's Prep for a Great Sale

I've mentioned a few ways you can help in terms of marketing and clarity about your goals and decisions. But making sure your home is market-ready is another huge way you can contribute to the successful sale of your home! Before even considering any renovations, most homeowners have plenty they can do to make their homes more attractive and make them more likely to breeze through inspections.

Beyond marketing strategies and clarifying your goals, preparing your home for the market is one of the most impactful steps you can take to ensure a

successful sale. Even before considering renovations, I will be by your side to help with simple, yet effective improvements to enhance your home's appeal and streamline the inspection process.

SET UP YOUR HOME TO INSPIRE OFFERS

When selling your home, you want prospective buyers to envision themselves living there. They should be able to imagine where their furniture will go, how they'll use the space, and what it would feel like to cook in the kitchen or relax in the living room. While your current setup may be perfect for you, it's essential to present your home in a way that appeals to a broad range of buyers. This process can be a team effort, get your whole household involved!

KEY AREAS TO FOCUS ON

Closets & Storage:

Cluttered closets make even spacious ones seem cramped. Declutter by donating or boxing up items you don't frequently use. This applies to all storage areas, bedroom closets, coat closets, kitchen pantries, and bathroom cabinets. Buyers will look inside, so show off the space, not the stuff!

Decluttering:

A lived-in home naturally has some clutter, but too much can distract buyers. Pack away non-essential items, neatly store frequently used things, and aim for an open, organized look. A tidy home gives buyers confidence that the property is well-maintained.

Deep Cleaning:

A sparkling-clean home makes a lasting impression. Start with a deep clean, wash windows, scrub grout, polish floors, and freshen up carpets. Pay special attention to kitchens and bathrooms, as buyers tend to inspect these areas closely. Once cleaned, keep up the standard for showings.

Furniture Arrangement:

You don't need new furniture, just a strategic setup! Rearrange to create an open and inviting feel. Consider removing bulky pieces that make rooms feel smaller. Your agent can offer guidance on staging to maximize your home's appeal.

Personal Items:

Minimize personal touches like family photos, political posters, or niche decor. Buyers should feel like they're walking into a space they could call home, not someone else's. Think of a model home, neutral, stylish, and welcoming.

Scent & Atmosphere:

First impressions start with scent. You may not notice your home's natural odors, but buyers will. Address pet, smoke, or food smells with deep cleaning. Open windows for fresh air and use subtle, inviting scents if needed.

Curb Appeal:

First impressions matter! Keep the lawn trimmed, touch up paint where needed, and add seasonal flowers for a welcoming entrance. Small upgrades, like a new welcome mat or updated door hardware, can make a big impact.

By taking these steps, you'll create a home that feels inviting and move-in ready, helping buyers fall in love, and make an offer!

BREEZE THROUGH INSPECTIONS

Before listing your home, it's important to address key maintenance tasks. Why? A well-maintained home not only reassures buyers but also helps inspections go smoothly. In some areas, lenders may even require certain repairs before approving the sale.

Here's a checklist I provide to my clients to ensure their home is in top shape before hitting the market:

- Is your water heater double-strapped?
- Do all smoke detectors function properly?
- Is there a CO₂ detector on each floor?
- Have you recently changed the furnace filters?

- Has your HVAC system been professionally serviced?
- Does your garage door open smoothly, and does the opener work correctly?
- Do any doors or sliding doors need lubrication (WD-40)?
- Are there any leaky faucets or slow-draining sinks?
- Are any window screens missing or torn?
- Do all light bulbs need replacing?
- Are blinds and shades functioning properly?
- Do all door locks and mechanisms work as they should?
- Are gates and latches secure, and is the fence in good condition?

Taking care of these simple maintenance tasks before listing your home can lead to a smoother sale and a more confident buyer.

Major Repairs

What about issues like mold, dry rot, leaks, broken roof tiles, health and safety concerns, or termite damage? If you're aware of these problems, I strongly recommend addressing them before listing your home. Many lenders won't approve a loan until these issues are resolved, and most buyers aren't looking to take on major repairs. Delaying these fixes can not only slow down your sale but may also deter potential buyers altogether.

If handling the repairs isn't financially feasible, at the very least, obtain a written estimate from a reputable vendor. This way, buyers have a clear understanding of the costs involved.

What about a leaking roof or other significant concerns? First, it's illegal to withhold known or suspected issues from buyers. Even if you could, savvy buyers will conduct a thorough home inspection during the contingency period. If a major problem is uncovered, the buyer may cancel the contract, or, at the very least, negotiate a significant price reduction.

When dealing with major systems such as roofing, plumbing, electrical, or structural components, the full extent of the issue is often unknown until work

begins. While a vendor might suggest a repair instead of a replacement, they can't guarantee the outcome without further inspection. Ideally, repairs should come with a warranty to provide buyers with confidence in the work done. If that's not possible, be prepared to navigate potential obstacles in the sale process.

As for major renovations, such as kitchen and bathroom updates, the decision is highly situational. This is a conversation you should have with your real estate agent. When I discuss renovations with my clients, I provide them with market data, cost estimates from my trusted vendors, and insights on the potential return on investment. We also evaluate how long the project will take, how it could impact the listing timeline, and what disruptions it may cause for the family. Weighing these factors carefully is essential before making a decision.

On the Market: Savvy Seller Do's and Don'ts

Congratulations! Your home is ready, your listing agent has launched a dynamic marketing campaign, and your property is officially on the market. This is an exciting milestone!

To help you navigate the next steps successfully, I've put together a list of essential do's and don'ts based on my years of experience. Unfortunately, some of these insights come from well-intentioned seller missteps that led to less-than-ideal outcomes, so trust me when I say, these are important!

SHOWING YOUR HOME

When you get a call that an agent wants to show your home, follow these steps to ensure your home looks its best. If you're at work during the day, take care of these tasks before leaving in the morning:

- **Turn on all lights.** A well-lit home feels bright, inviting, and easy to navigate, no one should have to fumble for light switches.
- **Use subtle, pleasant scents.** Placing lightly scented plug-ins (such as Glade Hawaiian Breeze) throughout the home creates a fresh ambiance without being overpowering.
- **Open all blinds and window treatments.** Natural light makes your home feel larger and more welcoming. If possible, remove window screens to maximize brightness and enhance the view. Store them in the garage for the buyer's convenience later.

- **Declutter and tidy up.** Since you've already prepped your home, this should just mean putting away anything that was used the day before.
- **Give special attention to the kitchen and bathrooms.** Ensure counters and sinks are wiped down, toilets are flushed, towels are neatly folded, and trash cans are emptied.
- **Sweep the front step and entryway.** First impressions matter. Plus, a clean entrance prevents debris from being tracked inside.
- **Make arrangements for pets.** While you love your furry friends, not all buyers do, and some may even be afraid of them. Consider taking them to a neighbor's house, keeping them in the yard or garage, or dropping them off at pet daycare during showings.
- **Be absent during the showing.** Buyers need to feel comfortable exploring your home freely. They should be able to open cabinets, test light switches, and discuss their thoughts with their agent without feeling watched. Even if you sit quietly in another room, your presence can make things awkward.

Now for an important “Don’t”, Do not engage in conversation!

Even if you accidentally arrive home while a buyer and their agent are still there, remain polite but avoid chatting. Why? Because even seemingly innocent conversations can weaken your negotiation position.

For example, one of my sellers once mentioned that she was moving to take care of her terminally ill mother. The buyer’s agent then implied that the market was slow (it wasn’t) and that his client was making a rare offer (he wasn’t). Using this leverage, the agent submitted a low-ball offer with a fast close. My client panicked and nearly accepted, but after some guidance, she held firm and ultimately secured a significantly higher offer with better terms.

Remember the old World War II slogan: **“Loose lips sink ships.”** Don’t sink your deal!

A LAST WORD

Honestly, there’s so much more I could share about selling your home! But with the knowledge from this book, you now have more insight than 99% of homeowners. I hope you’ve gained valuable information,

fresh ideas, and the confidence to navigate your home sale successfully.

If you have any questions or need assistance, feel free to contact me at **925-998-9747**. Also, be sure to visit www.eastbayrelocations.com for easy-to-watch, informative videos packed with valuable insights. We can also provide you with a **free marketing analysis and home evaluation** to help you make informed decisions.

Much Love and all the very best,

OH, AND ONE MORE THING

If you're like most people, you're probably confused about the August 2024 court ruling and settlement with the National Association of Realtors (NAR), what it means and how it affects you as a home seller. In the past, commissions were handled one way, but the process has now changed. Unfortunately, there's a lot of misinformation out there, and many people discussing the settlement don't fully understand its impact.

This book was completed long before the Sitzer-Burnett case even happened, so I've added this section to help clarify what the NAR settlement means for you and how it affects the sale of your home.

THE LAWSUIT AND WHAT CHANGED

The lawsuit targeted a long-standing Multiple Listing Service (MLS) rule called the Cooperative Compensation Model Rule (MLS Model Rule), a rule introduced in the 1990s by consumer protection advocates to protect buyers and their agents. Ironically, this rule was later ruled against!

One key challenge is that different MLSs, states, and brokerages have interpreted the settlement and regulations differently. This makes it crucial to have a thorough discussion with your agent to ensure you fully understand how the changes apply to you. While much of the ruling isn't drastically different from previous practices, the wording and technicalities have shifted.

Below are the most important changes that have come from the settlement:

BIG CHANGE #1: NO MORE PUBLIC OFFERS OF BUYER AGENT COMPENSATION ON THE MLS

- Sellers can no longer list compensation for a buyer's agent on the MLS platform.

- Compensation is still negotiable but must now be discussed off MLS, through direct conversations, flyers, websites, or signs.
- Some MLSs may still allow sellers to offer concessions (such as covering closing costs) on the MLS, but not agent commissions.
- Traditionally, sellers paid commissions for both the buyer's and seller's agents, this remains negotiable but must now be handled outside of MLS listings.

BIG CHANGE #2: BUYERS MUST SIGN A WRITTEN AGREEMENT WITH THEIR AGENT

- Before an agent can show homes, buyers must sign a written representation agreement outlining expectations, responsibilities, and compensation details.
- The agreement must specify how much the buyer's agent will be paid and clarify that the buyer is ultimately responsible for ensuring their agent gets paid, regardless of who actually covers the cost.

- This is similar to the listing agreement sellers sign with their agents and prevents misunderstandings later.
- Good buyer's agents already use these agreements, openly discussing commissions, educating buyers on market conditions, and demonstrating their value. Now, it's mandatory for everyone.

BIG CHANGE #3: SELLERS MUST PAY BUYER AGENT COMPENSATION DIRECTLY

- If a seller agrees to pay some or all of the buyer's agent compensation, they must now pay the buyer's agent or brokerage directly.
- Previously, payments flowed through the seller's agent or brokerage, who then shared the agreed portion with the buyer's agent.
- Now, sellers bypass their own agent and pay the buyer's agent directly, if they choose to offer compensation.

**SHOULD SELLERS
STILL OFFER
BUYER AGENT
COMPENSATION?**

If buyers are now responsible for paying their agent, why would sellers consider covering it? This is a case-by-case decision, but here's why it still matters:

- Buyers already face multiple costs, appraisals, inspections, title insurance, and closing costs, which can reduce how much mortgage they qualify for.
- A seller-paid commission makes a home more attractive to buyers, increasing the likelihood of offers.
- Without seller-paid compensation, some buyers may struggle to afford both their agent's commission and the home purchase, which could shrink your pool of potential buyers.
- Some buyers may refuse to consider homes where the seller isn't covering agent compensation, reducing competition and potentially affecting your final sale price.
- Other buyers might still make offers but expect a lower price to offset their additional expenses.

NAVIGATING THE MARKET: CASE-BY-CASE DECISION

Every sale is unique! Here's an example:

- You receive multiple offers, and three buyers ask you to cover their agent's commission, while one does not. All other terms are the same, it makes sense to choose the buyer who isn't asking for additional concessions.
- In a buyer's market, where fewer offers come in, offering compensation could attract more buyers and increase competition for your home.

The key is to work with an expert negotiator who understands market conditions, buyer behavior, and strategy. A skilled agent will help you evaluate whether offering compensation makes sense in your specific situation.

Your bottom line is what matters most. The right agent will help you navigate negotiations, analyze offers, and make the best financial decision to maximize your home sale.

WHY YOU WANT A BUYER TO HAVE AN AGENT

You've got your agent covering your back, so why should you care if a buyer has one?

First, after reading this book, you should clearly understand the importance of having a savvy agent for a successful home sale. According to NAR (2021), homes sold by owners (FSBOs), who represented themselves to "save money", actually sold for \$95,000 less on average.

In my own experience, I've seen sellers attempt to go it alone, only to realize too late that they don't know what they don't know, and they lose money. According to Orchard.com (2022), the median sale price for a seller without representation was \$310,000, while homes sold with an agent had a median price of \$405,000, again, a \$95,000 difference.

BUT IS A BUYER'S AGENT JUST AS IMPORTANT? ABSOLUTELY!

I'd argue that 99.9% of buyers who represent themselves have no idea what they're doing.

- They don't understand the market and submit unrealistic, unworkable offers.
- They lack negotiation skills and fail to craft creative compromises that benefit both parties.
- They don't fully understand their legal obligations under the Purchase Contract.
- They don't have access to qualified inspectors and vendors, and even if they do, they often misinterpret inspection reports.
- They frequently haven't properly researched their financing, leading to mortgage issues or even loan denials at the last minute.
- They often aren't prepared for closing costs, leading to last-minute delays.

I can't tell you how many escrows I've seen fall apart or experience major delays because the buyer lacked proper representation. And when that happens, you, as the seller, are left having to relist, re-market, and

start the entire process over, wasting precious time and money.

A well-represented buyer is a serious, prepared buyer, and that means a smoother transaction for everyone involved.

Myths About the Ruling and Settlement

MYTH #1: THE RULING HAPPENED BECAUSE AGENTS WERE GETTING PAID TOO MUCH.

False! The case had nothing to do with how much real estate agents earn. Selling a home is one of the biggest financial transactions you'll ever make, and you want an expert on your side, one who earns their commission by securing the best possible outcome for you.

If you don't feel your agent is worth every penny of what you've negotiated, you've got the wrong agent! A great agent won't work for free, but they will save you time, headaches, and money, often more than what you pay in commission.

MYTH #2: SELLERS WILL NOW REFUSE TO HELP WITH BUYER AGENT COMPENSATION.

False! Smart sellers understand that flexibility is key in real estate. With guidance from their agent, they'll consider factors like market conditions, urgency, and the pool of qualified buyers before deciding how to approach buyer agent compensation.

Before the ruling, it was rare for sellers to refuse to offer compensation to buyer agents, and that likely won't change significantly under the new regulations. However, this decision should always be made on a case-by-case basis with your agent's expertise.

BOTTOM LINE

There's no need to panic! Your agent will help you navigate these changes, ensuring your home is positioned effectively to attract buyers and achieve the best possible outcome.

Success Stories with Yasmine

"What truly stands out is Yasmine's unwavering support and care, she's not just a realtor but feels like a trusted family member. Her clever strategies and genuine dedication to her clients are unmatched. We're so grateful for her expertise and can confidently say this won't be our last experience with her. Highly recommend Yasmine Austere to anyone looking for the best in the business!"

-Mitra 2025

"We had the pleasure of working with Yasmine last year to find our dream home, which we secured at a fantastic deal. This was our second time working with Yasmine, and once again, she exceeded all our expectations. Yasmine is incredibly knowledgeable about the entire Bay Area market, which made the process so much smoother and stress-free."

-Farshid G. 2025

"Yasmine is seriously the best agent I have ever worked with. My current home is the 6th home I have owned and is the first time I have worked with Yasmine through the process. She will definitely be my "forever agent" as she has a great attention to detail and a great business mind while also personable, reliable and loyal. If I could give 10 stars I would."

-Lynn A 2024

"Yasmine is top of the notch real estate agent, she was a real partner to us along our buying process, she stayed on top of every detail from start to end, I would definitely recommend working with her!"

- Jose P. 2023

"She is the best real estate agent! I was amazed by her knowledge and her quick respond to all of our questions and concerns, she is always on top of everything and what I loved the most is that she always gives the extra mile!!"

-Hana P 2023

"Yasmine has been amazingly helpful and patient throughout this whole process. I've enjoyed working with Yasmine and will highly recommend her to anyone, also given the opportunity I would gladly work with her again."

-Michael 2021

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