

Bring on the BUYERS!

At last! Your home is on the market. The trumpets sound, it's center stage. Your agent has thoughtfully provided one of those little machines that dispenses sequential numbers on bits of paper such as you've seen at the deli counter in the supermarket. Those who wish to make offers on your home will queue up, take a number, and be dealt with on a first-come, first-served basis.

What? There is no line at the door? The number "1" droops woefully out of the little machine? And it is already your second day on the market. Is it back to the initial planning stage? Relax, and welcome to the real world of selling your home. The experience will consist of nothing but peaks and valleys. If you have done your homework, it is unlikely that you are in trouble. But it will take two or three weeks to know for sure, assuming you are not lucky enough to be caught in a hot sellers' market. Meanwhile, there is a lot of work to be done. It is your agent's responsibility to keep you advised of what could happen as well as what should happen. No one likes surprises.

A lockbox provides the best accessibility to a home for sale. All homes, except the multi-million-dollar homes of the rich and famous, should have one. Many agents will not show your home if it is one of the very few without a lockbox. And it is easy for a selling agent to select only those homes with a lockbox during an MLS computer search, thereby avoiding the hassle of either running around to collect your key, or hoping that your listing agent will arrive on time and then wait patiently two hours for the showing because the buyer dawdled over lunch.

No one can ensure that there will never be a security problem due to the use of a lockbox, but there are very few problems indeed. Current lockboxes make a record of each agent who enters, the day, time, and contact information. And an agent's unique lockbox smartcard will work only in conjunction with that agent's unique personal identification number, thus obviating problems with lost or stolen lockbox smartcards.

Unless otherwise agreed in writing, your home must be entered into the MLS computerized database within 48 hours of the signing of the standard listing agreement. If this is not done, either your agent is too busy to handle your home or is trying to sell it personally, rather than through the MLS and the other agents. In this event your agent has neither fulfilled his or her obligations to you nor to the thousands of other agents running loose. Therefore, you should terminate the listing agreement immediately and find another agent.

Carefully check the accuracy of the MLS printout and any information handout or sales brochure placed in your home. The vital importance of this is that the great majority of buyers first visit a home as a result of what they or their agent read from the MLS. In addition to accuracy, your home should be presented as positively as possible. While your agent will note all of the important features and emphasize highlights, unimportant information should be omitted so as not to dilute the overall impact. In the MLS data entry for a home, some of the details are required and therefore must be entered. Much of the rest is a matter of judgment. Your agent's familiarity in working with buyers, and knowledge of the MLS search options will be invaluable. For an in-depth description, see...

<http://www.davidr.net/selltext.html#23295>

Again, it is critical that you review your MLS printout carefully. Your buyer most likely will come from this very source. The printout involves so much information that even the most careful agent can produce an error. Any one bit of information in error could be insignificant, or it could be a **controlling factor in finding your buyer.**

If permitted, a sign has strategically been planted on your front lawn for maximum visibility. Your information handout should be located on a table in the foyer or elsewhere near the front door. Agents should always call to advise you when they plan to visit, and should present their business cards upon arrival. If you are not at home, they should leave their card as evidence of their visit. Note that your listing agent is usually not present for these showings.

It is not necessary for you to leave your home before a showing and hover in hiding until the agent and buyer depart. When an agent tells you that they will arrive at 2pm, that is an estimate. Your home is usually one of several to be shown and the buyer has much more control than the agent does over the progress of the tour. If several homes are bypassed without viewing in the morning, the agent and buyer could arrive at noon. If the buyer is a research librarian, it could be tomorrow. So, tidy up a bit, go on about your business, and relax. If you were going out anyway, you might get ready to go, but delay your departure to coincide with the visitors' arrival. However, if you try to vacate your home for every showing, you will go crazy. If your MLS data checks out OK, and your home is reasonably tidy, then *relax*, and good luck!

*This series is excerpted from David Rathgeber's **SELLING YOUR HOME in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area**
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