

## Tips for Finding a Real Estate Agent, "Revised"

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While doing some market research recently, I ran across an article entitled "Seven Tips to Finding a Real Estate Agent". This article was written by a well known author and appeared on a large, reputable, real estate web site. The intent of the article was to help you find an agent in your hometown. But what if you need an agent for your second home? Would these tips still apply to finding an agent hundreds or even thousands of miles from your primary residence? Let's review.

**1. Use a Realtor®.** Good suggestion. But have you ever used a real estate agent who was not a Realtor®? Most all real estate agents these days belong to a local MLS board. In Colorado, as in many states, this requires they join both the state and national Realtor® boards. This is a good thing for several reasons – not the least of which is that they must follow the Code of Ethics which establishes a higher level of conduct than is required by law. But is it really a selective, determining factor in finding a great agent? Probably not.

**2. Referrals.** The reader is told to ask friends, family, neighbors and coworkers about a particular agent. This works great in your neighborhood or town but will it work when you are trying to buy a second home that could very well be in another state? Again, probably not.

**3. Search Online for Agents Listings.** Seems to make sense but let's look closer. Most new agents are extremely tech savvy and understand Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM). But is this really what you want in an agent? Or would you rather have a more experienced, capable agent who could better represent your interests? Many of the best agents do not need to have their web sites rank high in a Google search because they get all the clients they can handle through repeat and referral business.

**4. Attend Open houses.** Not really practical if the houses are 1500 miles away. However, this could yield some useful information if you attended these open houses while visiting the town of your intended second home purchase.

**5. Track Neighborhood Signs.** The article advises you to watch "for sale" signs in your neighborhood and note when the sold sign appears. Again, logistically, this would not work when looking in another town.

**6. Using Print Advertising.** The reader is advised to call agents who are advertising in newspapers because "these agents might be specialists in that neighborhood". Might be specialists! Wouldn't it be a better idea to make sure they were specialists in that area by confirming it through an objective source instead of asking the agent?

**7. Recommendations from Professionals.** Now this one may hold some promise as sound advice. When you needed an estate planning attorney, you may well have asked your business attorney for a recommendation. Similarly, you may have asked your trusted family doctor for the name of an orthopedic specialist when you blew out your ACL. Over the years, you have developed trust in your family doctor and attorney and it makes sense to seek their council when you need specialized help.

Just be aware that this strategy could backfire in regard to real estate and here is why. Your local, trusted agent would be glad to refer you to an agent in a resort town. But chances are, he does not know any agents personally in that town. He will contact the manager (of the same real estate franchise he belongs to) in the town you are considering. Most likely, you will then end up working with the next agent who is "in line" to get a lead. You are taking a big risk that they will be the most appropriate agent to help you with your requirement.

These comments were not intended to offend the author of the original article or any real estate agents who secure prospects using these methods. The sole intent was to show that many of the methods one might use to select an agent to buy or sell a primary home, in the town where they live, can be of little help when it comes to choosing an agent to help them with a second home.

Picking an agent to help you buy a second home that is some distance away from your primary residence requires much more due diligence. You must dig a little deeper, research harder and find an objective source of knowledge. Otherwise, your dream of second home ownership could become a nightmare.

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