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Agent News > Columnist Blanche Evans

Arguments To Use Against Photo-Lazy Agents

by Blanche Evans

There are a lot of compelling reasons why agents don't include photos when they submit their listings to their local MLSs. Unfortunately, none benefit sellers.

As a broker, you need to protect your brokerage's image to consumers. If your agents consistently don't have photos of their listings, you need to do something about it. You need to establish a company policy and comebacks to agents' excuses as to why their listings consistently don't have photos.

Use the MLS to let your competition embarrass themselves

Your company's listings should be above reproach with every listing complete with a photo, album, virtual tour or all three. If they are, you and your agents could be using the Internet and your MLS to show sellers how well you and your company market listings. Point out to sellers in listing presentations that one good way to screen listing agents is to check how they market their homes in the MLS to other brokers and agents.

The MLS should have the date the listing was entered to the MLS. Use this to your advantage. Invite the sellers to compare listings. Which have photos, which don't? You don't want to diss a competitor -- that's against the Code of Ethics, but you have every right to point out a standard of excellence that you have and invite sellers to compare for themselves.

In addition, most MLSs provide some sort of consumer access through a public site or Realtor.com. If you really want to drive the point home, take your seller to those sites and show them the shocking number of listings that don't have photos. Of course, you modestly point out, your listings always have photos.

Why visuals are important



Columnist Blanche Evans

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Why are photos so important? Because according to the National Association of Realtors' 2003 *Profile Of Home Buyers and Sellers*, buyers told the [NAR](#) that the two features they look for in a real estate Web site are photos and property information. Seventy-eight percent found photos useful, and 77 percent found property information useful. Forty-seven percent of buyers found virtual tours to be useful.

Buyers use visuals to take action. After viewing homes on the Internet, 72 percent actually drove by or looked at a home they found online, 46 percent walked through the home, and 18 percent found an agent online.

Yet despite these compelling numbers, across the country many listings are marketed online without so much as a snapshot. Others festoon their listings with multiple photos and virtual tours, providing much more information about the listing, and inviting more interest from buyers.

Arguments against photo-lazy agents

So what are agents' excuses for not getting photos done in a timely fashion? Here are a few with some snappy comebacks to get these agents on board with helping you help them build a better company image and competitive advantage.

Photo-lazy excuse: Some MLSs take listing photos for continuity, but agents must wait until the MLS photographer gets around to their listing.

Argument: This approach is increasingly rare as MLSs merge or abandon this practice in favor of digital photo uploads directly from agents.

Says Russ Bergeron, president of Southern California MLS, "The argument we are using with our members for eliminating MLS photo shooting is because it will improve timeliness and improve the quality. When we take photos, we don't have access to the house -- so all you see is the front of the house -- and in California that's often not really what the house looks like. When the agent takes the photos, you don't have to worry about cars in the driveway, or garbage cans out front, etc. Plus, they can take multiple shots -- interior and exterior -- which I personally like better than a virtual tour."

Grab a camera.

Photo-lazy excuse: Some agents don't have time,

they say. "I'm a real estate agent, not a photographer."

Argument: Sellers expect you to market their homes. They don't care who takes the photos. And what better time to take the photos than when you take the listing? "You can upload photos at the same time you add the listing," suggests Bergeron.

Show the seller you're in gear to market their home as soon as you get the listing.

Photo-lazy excuse: Some sellers may not be ready. Not submitting a photo gives a little extra time to the seller to get the front door painted, the yard cleaned up or other presentation chores completed.

Argument: Knowing that buyer's agents and buyers with MLS access tend to pass over homes without photos, isn't it better to have a shot of something than nothing?

Don't be so linear. Is there any reason why the first photo entered into the MLS is the only photo ever? Photos can be substituted. Any agent can grab a digital camera and shoot the home from further away so the paint peels don't show, and then replace the shot when repairs and improvements are made. If the virtual tour operator can't get to the home for a few days, take a digital shot and then replace it when the virtual tour is ready.

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Blanche Evans is the publisher of [Agent News](#) and the associate editor of [Realty Times](#), the Internet's largest independent real estate news service. She is the author of two best-selling real estate books: [The Hottest e-Careers In Real Estate](#), [Real Estate](#)

[Education Company](#), an Internet marketing primer for real estate professionals, and [homesurfing.net: The Insider's Guide To Buying And Selling Your Home Using](#)

[The Internet, Dearborn](#), a consumer homebuying and selling guide. In 2000, she was recognized by the editors of REALTOR(r) Magazines as one of the 25 Most Influential People In Real Estate.

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